

'Israel ready to free Hamas founder'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel is ready to free the imprisoned founder of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, provided he renounces "terrorism," Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told Israeli television Friday. "If Sheikh Yassin calls on his people to release and even dialogue with him," Mr. Peres said, Sheikh Yassin, 59, was jailed for life in October 1991 for murder, incitement to violence and possession of weapons. He is paralysed in both legs, and his lawyers have repeatedly pointed to a deterioration in his health. Sheikh Yassin founded Hamas in 1988, after the Intifada erupted in the occupied territories. Hamas, a rival to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank, is violently opposed to the Middle East peace process and the week-long Hamas and the mainstream Fatah faction of the PLO signed an agreement to halt inter-Palestinian clashes in the run-up to self-rule.

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Condolences pour in as Jordan remains in mourning over passing of Queen Zein

President Assad visits Amman to condole King Hussein

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein and members of the Royal Family on Friday continued to receive condolences from Jordanians and foreign leaders over the passing of Her Majesty Queen Zein Al Sharaf, the Queen Mother.

The Queen Mother, who passed away on Tuesday at the age of 85, was laid to rest at the Royal Cemetery on Wednesday.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad visited Amman on Thursday to personally offer his condolences to the King, who visited him in Syria to condole him over the death of his son, Basil, 31, in a car crash in January.

President Assad, paying his first visit to Jordan in four years, was accompanied by his Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharra and Information Minister Mohammad Salman.

The Jordan News Agency

cy, Petra, said the King and President Assad also exchanged views on bilateral relations and stressed the need to further enhance Syrian-Jordanian relations.

The meeting between the King and President Assad was attended by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and the King's advisors.

King Hussein voiced appreciation to President Assad for personally coming to Jordan to offer his condolences and implored Almighty God to protect him and the Syrian people.

Receiving and seeing off President Assad were the King, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah, Prince Faisal, Prince Hashem, Prince Hamzah, Prince Talal Ben Muhammad and Prince Rashid Ben Al Hassan, Dr. Majali, Sharif Zeid, the King's advisors,

Cabinet members and other senior officials.

Also on Thursday, the King received two envoys from Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat, who, earlier reports had said, was expected to visit Amman to pay condolences to the King.

Mr. Arafat's envoys who were received by the King were Abbas Zaki, a prominent member of the Fatah Central Committee, and Al Tayeb Abdul Rahim, the Palestinian ambassador to Jordan.

On Friday, the King received a telephone call from Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who offered his own condolences and those of the government and people of Egypt, Petra said.

The Royal Court meanwhile continued to receive cables of condolences from present and former heads of state and prime minis-

Al Fatiha recited

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein, accompanied by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, members of the Royal Family, Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and Royal Court Imam Ahmad Hakeel on Friday visited the tomb of the late Queen Zein Al Sharaf where they read Al Fatiha (the first sura in the Holy Quran) for her soul.

ters, ministers, heads of national, Arab and international organisations, secretaries general of political parties, parliamentarians, ambassadors and representatives of the Jordanian community in America, Australia, Canada, Europe and the Arab World.

The King also received cables of condolences from

King Carl Gustav of Sweden, Romanian President Ion Iliescu, Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the president of the Comoros Federal Council, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali, former Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, former King of Malaysia Sultan Azlan Shah, Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu, Speaker of the Egyptian Peoples Assembly Ahmad Fathi Sorour, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mousa, Sheikh Rashid Ben Abdullah Ben Mohammad Al Khalifah and former Egyptian Prime Minister Abdul Aziz Hijazi.

The King also received cables of condolences from Secretary General of the Islamic Council for International Dawa and Relief Kamel Al Sharif, Deputy Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural



His Majesty King Hussein on Thursday holds meeting attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan (Petra photo)

Organisation (UNESCO) Adnan Badran, former Chairman of the Royal Commission for Jerusalem Affairs Akram Zaiter, the director of the Save the Children Federation, the director general of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the president of the Arab Contractors Union, the regional director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the director of Goethe Institute in Beirut, Patriarch Michael Sabbah, the American Ladies of Amman, the president of

the Lebanese Liberal party, wife of the Bahraini Crown Prince Sabika Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Nash Lahoud and Adnan Tarabulsi, members of the Lebanese Lower House, Sheikh Nahyan Ben Mubarak Al Nahayan, Bishop Boulos Al Souqi of the Orthodox Syrian Church in Damascus, Hassan Khreis, the secretary general of the Arab Doctors Union, and the president of the Arab Academy for Certified Accountants.

Cables were also sent by members of the Upper and

Lower Houses of Parliament, presidents of Jordanian universities, mayors and village council heads, secretaries-general of political parties in Jordan, tribal leaders, refugee camp representatives, doctors, engineers, advocates, banks and companies' directors and presidents of both the Jordanian press and writers associations.

The Royal Court announced that a condolences register will remain open from Saturday at the Raghadan and Basman palaces from 12-2 p.m.

Israel and PLO sign economy agreement

PARIS (Agencies) — Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed a landmark economic accord here Friday and called for financial aid from the international community to help launch Palestinian self-rule.



Palestinian economic chief Ahmad Qouria (right) and Israeli Finance Minister Avraham Shohat shake hands after Friday's signing of an economic agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (AFP photo)

Self-rule agreement set for Cairo signing on May 4

CAIRO (Agencies) — A historic accord to launch Palestinian self-rule on territories occupied by Israel is due to be signed Wednesday if a few remaining sticky disputes can be settled.

"It's the end of a long voyage and the beginning of a new chapter in relations between the Palestinian people and ourselves," said Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

The date was set by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who played a pivotal role in the breakthrough, even as Secretary of State Warren Christopher abandoned a passive U.S. stance to help Mr. Peres and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat narrow their differences.

Mr. Christopher said he would remain in the region "to assist in any way I can."

He then flew to Tel Aviv for a meeting Friday with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Their agenda includes the stalled peace talks Israel had been holding with three Arab countries, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon (see separate story).

Mr. Rabin will go to Cairo to

After several months of tough negotiations in the French capital, the accord was signed by Israeli Finance Minister Avraham Shohat and Ahmad Qouria, head of the PLO's economic department.

The accord links relations

between Israel and the future autonomous areas on customs tariffs, monetary policy, labour, taxation, agriculture, fuel prices, manufacturing, insurance and tourism (see summary on page 10).

"Today we witness another cornerstone to the edifice of peace," Mr. Shohat said in a speech, ahead of the signing due to take place next Wednesday in Cairo on an overall agreement on the start of self-rule in Gaza and Jericho.

"I want to emphasise and assure the Palestinians that I consider the success of their efforts to build their economy as essential to the success of the whole peace process."

Mr. Qouria called for "international donors and the World Bank to put an end to their reticence to contribute to the running expenses of the Palestinian administration."

Liberal economic policies would be adopted in the territories, he pledged, inviting

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Christopher given Israeli plan for Syria

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin presented U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher with a "global" plan for peace with Syria which will be passed on to Damascus on Saturday.

"We have put forward a global approach which includes, the type of peace, the principle of a withdrawal, the stages and some requests to the United States," Mr. Rabin said after two sessions of talks with the secretary.

Both men refused to reveal details of the plan for the Golan Heights, but officials say Israel wants Washington to guarantee security arrangements in a withdrawal phased over 10 years.

"We have presented our positions in principle to the secretary, all our conditions for reaching peace with Syria," added Mr. Rabin, calling for direct negotiations.

"My visit here comes at a time of great hope for peace," Mr. Christopher told reporters.

"We now need to make progress on the Syrian track." He is due to return to Israel and brief Mr. Rabin on Syria's reaction on Sunday.

Mr. Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres were "absolutely serious about this matter and have urged me to attend to it with the utmost seriousness and determination," Mr. Christopher said.

"Tomorrow, I will travel to Damascus. I expect the conversations there to be as serious and substantive as the conversations here."

Mr. Christopher echoed Mr.

Rabin's call for peace between Israel and all its neighbours.

"Our goal is a comprehensive peace."

Mr. Peres said: "We are looking how to open the road for meaningful negotiations with the Syrians. We are sincerely interested in making peace with Syria."

Israel Radio reported that Mr. Rabin complained to the secretary that Syria was "dishonest" in demanding back all the Golan Heights while showing no sign of preparing for peace.

"Syria is demanding everything but not even offering any confidence-building measures in return."

"It's dishonest" the prime minister reportedly said. He also questioned how Israelis could believe President Assad wanted peace when he refuses a face-to-face meeting.

The Israeli proposals include an offer to withdraw from the Golan Heights in phases and plans for security arrangements to guard against use of the strategic enclave for attacks on Israel.

But Israel is not prepared to spell out how much it might yield of the land it seized from Syria in the 1967 war, Israeli government sources said.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad is demanding recovery of all the territory. Mr. Rabin last week gave him cause for optimism by saying he would not let the 13,000 Jewish settlers on the Golan stand in the

(Continued on page 5)

Jordan to ease restrictions on W.Bank, Gaza residents

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government announced Friday it will be easing entry and residency restrictions on Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Interior Minister Saleh Hamad said "new and relaxed" measures would be enforced starting Sunday because current rules for the two million Palestinians living in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip were no longer feasible.

The earlier measures were aimed at consolidating Palestinian steadfastness in the occupied territories and blocking Israeli plans of pushing out

Palestinians from their homeland," Mr. Hamad said in comments during a visit to the King Hussein Bridge.

"The ministry has decided to review all measures related to the entry of Gaza and West Bank citizens to make it easier for them," Mr. Hamad told the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Mr. Hamad promised to cut down on tough and lengthy procedures to renew Jordanian passports issued to West Bank residents.

Jordan reinforced existing rules on the entry of Palestinians across the Jordan River in September to curb an influx

sparked by new Israeli measures which eased travel for Arabs residing in the occupied territories.

"Our previous regulations were to prevent the migration of Palestinians by Israel which has used different means to achieve that goal," a Jordanian official told Reuters.

"But now, since there will be a self-rule agreement between Israel and the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) followed by the start of Palestinian autonomy which we hope will encourage Palestinians to stay in the occupied territories,

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Yemen crisis flares into clashes

SANAA (Agencies) — Fighting between rival army units has spread to South Yemen, southern officials said, and tension also rose in the north with accusations that southern troops spread out from barracks there Friday.

The fighting has undermined efforts to salvage the four-year union of the former North and South Yemen and brought this country closer to possible civil war.

Officials in Aden, capital of former South Yemen, said details of the new confrontations there were still sketchy.

They said it was unclear when exactly the battles broke out. But the southerners apparently had moved against the northerners to avenge the attack against their third brigade in Amran, north of Sanaa, earlier in the week.

The southern officials,

speaking on condition of anonymity, had no word of casualties in the new battles in Abyan province, 50 kilometres east of Aden, and Lahej Province, 100 kilometres east of the southern capital.

In Sanaa, the northern-run Defence Ministry said Friday that southern troops at a base in Damir, 200 kilometres south of the northern capital, had spread out from the camp.

It said in a statement that the deployment of the southern Basaheeb Brigade came "at the orders of the separatist command in the (southern) Yemen Socialist Party to explode, the military situation there."

Western diplomats also warned that Damir could become a major flashpoint because it is on the main road that links Sanaa with Aden.

A military commission that

includes officers from other Arab states as well as Western military attaches visited Damir in an effort to persuade commanders to order the troops back to barracks.

There have been no new reports of fighting in Amran.

Political sources in Sanaa about 400 soldiers have been killed or wounded in the fighting 50 kilometres from the capital Sanaa.

The two-day battle involved around 200 tanks from both sides and was the worst clash since North and South Yemen merged four years ago, the sources in Sanaa said.

"I believe about 400 people have been killed or wounded," one political source said, a figure agreed by others.

The sources said the situation at the battlefield around

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Historic South African polls judged as fair

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies) — Black voters grabbed their last chance to vote in South Africa's historic all-race elections on Friday when polling went into extra time.

Nelson Mandela, appearing presidential in a nationally-broadcast television interview, said that despite polling problems in some parts of the country he believed the voting overall would be judged fair.

"I am confident we will be able to pronounce these elections fair and free," he said.

South Africa's financial markets, looking for stability under majority rule after the violent death-beats years of apartheid, appeared to agree. They surged on Friday in their first full session since voting began on Tuesday.

There's the impression that the election will be recognised

as free and fair and that there will be a settled outcome," one bond trader said.

Neighbouring Zimbabwe, one of the bitterest foes of apartheid since its metamorphosis from white minority-ruled Rhodesia in 1981, established diplomatic ties with South Africa.

Foreign Minister Nathan Shamuyarira said on Friday that following South Africa's election and the adoption of a non-racial constitution, his country was satisfied that political change was irreversible.

President de Klerk also said he was confident that the watershed all-race elections would be declared free and fair.

"We will have at the end of the day an announcement that this election... will be free and fair," he told a news confer-

ence at the headquarters of his National Party.

Mr. De Klerk acknowledged that there had been irregularities during the vote, but said the complaints would be dealt with and should not affect the outcome. "There is no evidence to suggest that (irregularities) took place on a large scale," he said.

The head of the body organising South Africa's elections said that overall the poll had been an outstanding success.

But Independent Electoral Commission Chairman Judge Johann Krieger urged the country to be patient during vote counting despite frustration over organisational glitches that forced an extra day's polling in six former black homelands.

"We are doing well, Krieger told a news conference, "over-

all, an outstanding success."

Urging patience, he warned that a breakdown in administration of the elections on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday would have what he called "a knock-on effect on the next two phases" — counting and calculating the votes.

"Let's maintain good order and patience such as prevailed throughout the country," he said.

Despite predictions of election violence and a spate of bombings early in the week blamed on white extremists opposed to black rule, most balloting occurred in an atmosphere of calm.

Police moved to avert any further trouble from far-right whites by declaring 15 towns west and southwest of Johannesburg unrest areas. That gives police expanded powers

to detain people and break up public gatherings in the towns, all pro-apartheid strongholds.

"We did this to prevent conflict and violence in the area," said police Capt. Kees De-genaar.

Thirty-three white extremists appeared in court Friday in connection with the bombings that killed 21 people and injured scores in the Johannesburg area. On Thursday, an arms cache was seized at a right-wing farm near Pretoria.

Chaos that marred voting in much of the country Tuesday and Wednesday subsided by Thursday. It appeared the majority of blacks, voting for the first time in their lives, stormed the polls in the first two days in their enthusiasm.

Voters in black-dominated

(Continued on page 5)

Airlines prepare for open skies in peace

By Ed Blanche
The Associated Press

NICOSIA — Arab and Israeli airlines are getting ready for a new era when the Middle East's skies, scene of savage air battles over recent decades, open up after a regional peace settlement.

A comprehensive agreement is still some way off, but major carriers are already drawing up plans to open routes between Israel and the Arab World that have been banned for 45 years, airline officials say.

Arah executives are reluctant to publicly discuss their plans until a peace settlement has been reached. But privately they say the potential for a major boost in tourism and eventually Arab-Israeli business ventures is a big financial incentive.

Adli Dhajani, secretary-general of the Arab Air Carriers Organisation, noted recently that peace "would definitely induce an economic dividend in the region's travel market" that could carry over into airline cooperation.

Israel, using French airline officials as go-betweens, has offered to allow Royal Jordanian airlines to fly over Israel to shorten flight times to Europe, informed sources said.

Israel says it is willing to do so if Jordan reciprocates. Israeli Transport Minister Yisrael Kessar says talks are under way with Morocco to establish direct air links.

He said that Israel's national carrier, El Al, wants to fly over Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states to shorten its Far East routes.

The current 13-hour flight from Tel Aviv to Bangkok, for instance, would be cut to 7½ hours if El Al is allowed to fly south instead of the circuitous route it now has to take to avoid Arab airspace.

El Al President Raphael Harlev said: "The shorter routes will allow us to be more competitive. I don't think that, with peace, the Arab countries will refuse to give us this freedom."

Arkia, a private domestic Israeli airline, is looking to expand throughout the region and said last November it seeks agents in Amman, Beirut and Damascus to provide ground and refueling facilities once the Middle East's skies open up.

Mr. Harlev said peace could bring once-unthinkable cooperation between Israel and Arab airlines, particularly at a time when the trend in civil aviation is for alliances between the major airlines to

carve up global passenger traffic among themselves.

This restructuring of the world's airline industry may propel the Middle East's carriers towards such alliances — though whether this will mean Arab-Israeli cooperation rather than simply alliances between Arab carriers is still an open question.

That could mean some falling by the wayside. As has happened in the United States where the 200 airlines operating a few years ago have dwindled to a handful.

"Such cooperation will enable Egyptian, Royal Jordanian, Gulf Air and El Al to offer joint packages, mainly in the United States and we think the demand for this is promising," Mr. Harlev said.

El Al already operates a joint-marketing package with Egyptair and Turkish Airlines in the United States.

"By adding partners and options, it will be even more attractive to the potential tourist to the Middle East," Mr. Harlev said.

Don Ciminelli of the Boeing Corporation, which sells airliners to many regional carriers, noted: "Once peace has been achieved, anything's possible. There's bound to be change, but it's not going to happen overnight."

"You're more likely to see Arab and Israeli airlines cooperation internationally before there's regional cooperation."

The catalyst to overcome the deep-rooted hostility between Arabs and Israelis may well be tourism, particularly in the Holy Land encompassing Israel, Jordan and the emergent Palestinian entity.

"Peace will bring a golden moment for Middle Eastern tourism, and that in itself could open up new economic imperatives that will bring regional carriers together," Mr. Ciminelli told the AP in Dubai recently.

Tourism is likely to be the Palestinians' main economic asset. France has proposed funding an airport near Jericho, the West Bank town where Yasser Arafat will set up his headquarters in the initial period of limited self-rule.

The facility is likely to be built on an existing airfield outside the city.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is believed to have plans for a new airport at Rafah in the Gaza Strip — with runways in Egypt's Sinai desert and terminal buildings in Gaza.

Israel and most Arab countries have airport enlargement programmes underway.

Palestinian women seek to boost gains

WASHINGTON (USIA) — Palestinian women's groups have succeeded in placing their concerns on the agenda of the broader Palestinian leadership, but are far from realising their goals, believes one scholar.

"The voices of Palestinian women are increasingly being heard," Joost Hilterman, director of the Kurdish project of Middle East Watch, said during an April 12 lecture at the Middle East Institute.

"There is clearly a new discourse" among Palestinians, and their national leadership is beginning to recognise "that women's issues simply can't be wished away," he said. "But it's still at the level of discourse. It's not on the level of concrete gains — yet."

Palestinian feminists are wary of the so-called "Algeria syndrome," in which women who were once encouraged to participate in revolutionary activity are pressured to resume their traditional roles following independence, he said. "This syndrome remains very real today for the Palestinians."

Palestinian women are thus drafting new laws governing divorce, inheritance, domestic abuse and sexual harassment, in the hope that those amendments will be accepted by the Palestinian authority that will govern the West Bank and Gaza Strip following the Israeli military withdrawal, he said.

Mr. Hilterman, the author of a 1991 book entitled "Behind the Intifada: Labour and Women's Movements in the Occupied Territories," said he had not done on-site research in the occupied territories since 1990.

Consequently, his lecture focused on the history of the Palestinian women's movement, beginning with its inception in the 1920s as an offshoot of the Palestinian national movement.

In the early years, the activists were usually the wives of prominent Palestinian nationalists, and the two movements were "entirely intertwined," Mr. Hilterman said.

He argued that while women benefited from their association with the broader nationalist movement, their concerns were generally subordinated to the overriding national agenda: "The modern women's movement has not entirely shaken off (its) past as an essentially elitist movement that remains closely linked — and to some extent dependent — on the Palestinian national movement."

Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, the movement grew as women activists began to mobilise

grass-roots support. "Since the 1970's there has been an attempt both from the bottom-up and from the top-down to mobilise the so-called masses of the population," Mr. Hilterman said.

The movement also benefited from women's growing access to education and employment opportunities, and from the fact that women were highly visible combatants in the intifada which began four years ago.

"Women were basically running the street affairs" during the Palestinian uprising, and this activism gave the women's movement "a legitimacy and a profile" that had previously lacked, Mr. Hilterman noted.

Those trends were reinforced by the emergence of women like Hanan Ashrawi, the spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East talks. As one of the most visible participants in the peace process, she quickly became a symbol of the modern Palestinian woman. Other women, such as Zahira Kamal and Su'ad Ameri, made names for themselves as members of the "technical committees" that are planning the functions of the new Palestinian authority.

"They have gained some political power and some political space for themselves... and maybe opened the door for others to follow," Mr. Hilterman said.

At the same time, he noted, women activists have suffered some disappointments since the September 1993 signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Not only were women's issues "largely excluded" from the text of the Declaration of Principles, but they were rarely mentioned in the underground leaflets distributed following the signing of the peace accord.

"It's symptomatic, because the whole political process is clearly exclusive of women's issues," Mr. Hilterman said. He noted that while most of the Palestinian technical committees receive money from the PLO, the committee on women's issues is funded by outside sources.

"These kinds of phenomena are increasing the fears among women activists that the existing Palestinian authority is patriarchal and anti-democratic," Mr. Hilterman said.

"Their voices are few and they are part of an essentially male chorus," he said of prominent Palestinian women. "And this chorus is singing a very old song."

Israeli censors block report of nuclear arms

The Boston Globe

ISRAELI military censor has banned in its entirety a 100-page article on the early political history of Israel's nuclear weapons programme written by a researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in a case that may expose the limits of one of the country's remaining policy taboos.

The scholar, Avner Cohen of Israel, has challenged the ban in Israel's supreme court, alleging that since his work is based almost exclusively on public documents, the censor is carrying out a political vendetta rather than protecting the country's security.

The high court has given the defence minister 40 days to explain itself in a rare case of academic censorship. Cohen's

article was to appear in a book on the Middle East arms balance to be published by MIT's Centre for International Studies, where he is a fellow. As an Israeli he must submit his work to the censor here or face prosecution upon his return.

In the past few years, Cohen, who has a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Chicago, has advocated more open debate on Israel's nuclear arsenal which the government has never admitted exists.

Discussion on many once-secret subjects has crept into the open in recent years, from the work of the Shin Bet internal security service to the existence of secret commando units in the army. But the existence of nuclear weapons is still seen as off-limits.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rights group concerned about Syria detainees

LONDON (R) — Amnesty International said Thursday written to the Syrian government asking about the fate of men it said had held without trial since last August. Human rights group said Syria, contrary to international standards and its own laws, frequently held political prisoners without allowing them communication with the outside world. "For the last nine months the authorities have been completely silent about the fate of these men," it said. "No one is allowed to see them and we are gravely concerned that they are being subjected to torture and ill-treatment." Amnesty said the 11 men were arrested in August 1993 and attended the funeral of Salah Jadid, whom it described as a former prisoner of conscience who died in custody years in detention without charge or trial. "Among them are Fadi and Usama Munir Jadid, nephews of the late Salah Jadid," the statement said. "The human rights organisation is asking the Syrian authorities for information about whereabouts of the 11 detainees and requests that they be given prompt access to lawyers and their families for medical attention if necessary." Amnesty said that the men were arrested purely because they were associated with Mr. Jadid then they were prisoners of conscience.

Israel condemns genocide of Armenians

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel has issued its first condemnation of the Turkish genocide of Armenians, a tradition of silence to appease its regional ally. Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin told the Israeli parliament Israel would become part of an effort to ensure the genocide is not forgotten. "We will always reject any attempt to erase its memory, even for some political advantage," he said. The Turkish army massacred between one and two million Armenians in 1917 in long marches and through methods. Israeli scholars have said that the Armenian genocide approaches the German slaughter during World War II. But Israeli authorities, anxious to maintain ties with Turkey — long the only Islamic state to recognise the state — have avoided officially condemning the genocide. In 1990, they suppressed the screening of a documentary on Israel's state-owned television, Mr. Beilin said. In a recent television interview with the ambassador to Israel, in which the ambassador said Armenian deaths were related to fighting in World War I, Mr. Beilin said, "It was not war, it was a massacre and genocide, something the world must remember." Mr. Beilin also told the parliament that Turkey has become closer in recent months, in the peace talks with the Palestinians and state visits to the Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Foreign Minister Pines.

Landslide kills 20 in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A landslide in a remote province of Afghanistan killed 20 people and destroyed homes, state-run Radio Kabul reported. Rocks tumbled down the mountains outside the tiny village of Badakhshan province, about 400 kilometres north of Kabul, according to the radio broadcast. It was not clear when the landslide occurred, but it usually takes several days before news from remote areas of Afghanistan reaches the capital. Hundreds of villages reportedly left homeless, Radio Kabul reported.

Canada apologises for Tehran incident

OTTAWA (AP) — Canada's ambassador to Iran has apologised after an embassy employee insulted Iranian valets, Immigration Minister Sergio Marchi said Thursday. "Regrettably this gentleman was under considerable pressure and he acted in a very unprofessional way," Marchi said. "The ambassador there made an apology which was the correct thing to do, and this individual reassigned given the pressure he was under." Ambassador Donald McLennan was summoned to the Iranian Ministry on Wednesday after the employee insulted who had dropped their visa applications into a bin, at the embassy door. "An angry and impatient embassy employee then emerges out of the building begins insulting and abusing everyone in such a way that the who know English wished they did not know the language," the Iranian daily newspaper Hamsahri reported. Immigration spokesman Andre Labelle said the newspaper's description was pretty much what happened. Mr. Marchi said he was reassured Iran this was an isolated incident. "To the best of my knowledge it was a question of the strain and things got out of control," he said. Mr. Marchi said he will also look at the atmosphere at the embassy. The Iranian Islamic Republic News said Mr. McLennan "apologised for an expressed regret over the incident and promised that similar cases shall not occur in the future."

U.N. peace bid for Cyprus collapses

NICOSIA (AFP) — U.N. mediation between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot sides to push through a package of confidence-building measures on their divided island has collapsed, envoy Joe Clark, a former Canadian foreign minister, said late Thursday. "I don't have an agreement to report," he said. "I don't see much point in continuing negotiations." He was to report to U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali next week, having failed to clinch a deal by the deadline of end of April. Although the two sides had agreed in principle on the package, Turkish-Cypriot leader Denktash finally rejected it on the grounds that it was modified to the advantage of the Greek-Cypriots. Mr. Clark, following intensive talks since February in Athens and Ankara, has dismissed the charge. Under the package, the Turks were to hand over the deserted coastal town of Varosha to U.N. control and Nicosia was to reopen under U.N. administration, 20 years in closure. Among the main stumbling-blocks was access to Varosha, a ghost town controlled by Turkish forces.

'Apostasy case saved Egyptian professor'

CAIRO (AP) — Muslim fundamentalists who dragged a university professor into court to force him to divorce his wife have now declared they have done the professor a favour — indeed, saving his life.

Sheikh Youssef al Badri, spokesman for the Islamic lawyers who brought suit against Nasr Abu Zeid, explained the fundamentalists' action Thursday as another chapter begun in the court case against Mr. Abu Zeid.

He said that without the fundamentalists' suit as a legal way to battle Mr. Abu Zeid, the professor otherwise might "have ended like Farag Foda," an outspoken critic of Islamic extremism who was murdered by radicals two years ago.

The case of Mr. Abu Zeid, a literature professor at Cairo University criticised by the

fundamentalists for his writings, has been watched closely by secular Egyptians. They fear the radicals are winning their battle for an Islamic state in small but steady ways.

The militants opened a campaign two years ago to oust the largely secular government and impose Islamic rule. More than 350 people have been killed in violence since.

The professor's lawyer, Abdullah Khalil, says the court case represents "a new trend the Muslim fundamentalists try and impose their will through the courts... a new weapon to control peoples' lives."

Seven fundamentalist lawyers filed suit last May claiming that the writings of Mr. Abu Zeid made him guilty of apostasy, the denouncing of one's faith. They argued this

meant he could not be married to a Muslim woman.

Mr. Abu Zeid and his wife, a teacher of French, both say they want to remain married. He says his writings are scholarly studies of Islamic literature. A local court threw the case out in January, saying the lawyers had no legitimate interest.

But the lawyers appealed and hearings that could drag into next year began Thursday. The first session last only two minutes and then was continued until July 26 after Mr. Abu Zeid's lawyers asked for time to study the appeal papers.

Mr. Badri said radicals might have killed Abu Zeid if the court case had not been brought as "a gentle way" to deal with the issue of his supposed insults to Islam.

Morocco launches family planning

RABAT (R) — Morocco is launching a \$60-million family planning programme aimed at reducing population growth from 2.2 per cent in 1994 to 1.7 per cent by the next century.

"Despite government efforts in birth control, the present 2.2 per cent population growth remains high. Every two minutes three babies are born," Health Minister Abdul Rahim Harouchi told Reuters on Thursday.

According to official figures, Morocco's population is 26.2 million at present.

To absorb population growth at the present rate, Mr. Harouchi said, Morocco needs to build nine hospitals, 8,500 classrooms, 150,000 houses and create 280,000 more jobs each year.

The population doubled in 20 years to 20 million in 1980 from 10 million in 1960. "It is expected to reach 35 million by the year 2012," a Moroccan population expert said.

In a five-year plan, the Health Ministry will concentrate its efforts on rural areas where medical care is insufficient and infrastructure cannot meet the population needs.

"In November 180 mobile medical units will start a major medical campaign, including a contraception promotion programme in rural regions," Mr. Harouchi said. Half of the population lives in rural areas.

The units, described as mobile hospitals, will tour remote areas, where illiteracy is over 65 per cent, to explain new birth control methods.

"We must struggle on all fronts and with all means to attain a 1.7 per cent population growth by the next century, to keep pace with economic growth," Mr. Harouchi said.

With a large-scale medical education and information campaign, Morocco hopes to meet the objective of two children per woman instead of four at present, experts said.

In 1993, more than 3,000 doctors and nurses were involved in a contraceptive campaign which benefited more than half a million women, the Health Ministry said.

In Memory of Salameh Twal

As a child, your best friend is the one who will share all your adventures, who is as mischievous and as curious about the world as you are.

As an adolescent, your best friend shares all your anxieties, dreams and expectations about growing up.

As an adult, your best friend is much more than that. He or she is the person who knows you best, who understands you without words and who is there when needed.

The sudden and untimely loss of such a friend is a tragedy that not even time can mend. A gap remains that can not be filled and your life is changed for ever. Too many things remind you of the good and bad times you shared and every detail of the past remains a vivid reality. The only condolence you have is that he lived a full life and always felt loved by his family and friends alike.

He has moved on to a better world and left us all behind to mourn and grieve and ask ourselves why? All that remains for us to say is farewell dear friend, we will always love you very much.

Anwar & Cosima

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Le Monde Sous Marin
18:30 Dossier De La Semaine
19:00 News in French
19:15 News in Urdu
19:30 News in Hebrew
19:45 Charlie Chaplin
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 The Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air
21:00 The Campbell
21:30 News in English
22:00 Eurovision Song Contest (Live From Dublin)

PRAYER TIMES

06:25 Fajr
07:00 Sunrise/Dawn
12:33 Dhuhr
16:12 'Asr
19:17 Maghreb
20:42 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedeth, Tel. 810740
Assumption of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terraced Church Tel. 622360
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 773131
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 625256
German-Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 644195
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be relatively cold with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds westerly active to moderate. In Aqaba, it will be windy with winds northerly active and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 12/23
Aqaba 19/32

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Nidal As'ad 751672
Dr. Hanna Mansour 750197
Dr. Khalid Rashed 816715
Dr. Riq Abu Zeina 894285
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoth pharmacy 626672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yaacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Fayed Qadi 248743
Alquds pharmacy (—)

DEPARTURES

Deserts 12/25
Jordan Valley 16/30

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 24, Aqaba 33 Humidity readings: Amman 37 per cent, Aqaba 24 per cent.

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630441
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rasme Police 02, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630221
Hotel Complaints 605800
Pries Complaints 661179
Water and Sewerage Complaints 661179
Amman Municipality 637055
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 636730
Overseas Calls Central Amman Telephone 625101
Repairs Abdul Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn. 642816
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn. 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mafes, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Husseini Hospital 667221/2
J. Amn. 661273/3
J. Amn. 664164/6
J. Amn. 777101/3
Ashrafieh 775111/26
J. Amn. 891611/15
Hospital 602240/9
J. Amn. 674155
Zarga Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarga National Hospital (09)903600
Ba Sina Hospital (09)980732
Al-Husseini Medical Centre (09)980990
IRBID:
Princess Beama Hospital (02)273333
Great Catholic Hospital (02)477100
Ras Al-Nadhe Hospital (02)477100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information Department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
05:30 Jakarta, Singapore (RJ)
09:45 New Delhi (RJ)
10:25 Athens (RJ)
10:30 Dhahran (RJ)
10:45 Karachi, Dubai (P)
11:00 Beirut (RJ)
11:00 Colombo (RJ)
16:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:25 Cairo (RJ)
19:20 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
19:30 London, Berlin (RJ)
22:40 Paris (add) (RJ)
08:15 Rome, Brussels (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

04:30 Vienna (OA)
11:20 Sanaa (YV)
15:45 Rome (AZ)
19:45 Dubai (EK)
20:30 Paris, Damascus (AF)
23:25 Amsterdam (KL)
00:30 Cairo (MS)

HIJAZ RAILWAY

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m.
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m.
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m.
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m.

MARKET PRICES

Apples lower price in file

Apple
Banana
Banana (Mukammal)
Cabbage
Carrot
Cauliflower
Cucumbers (large)
Cucumbers (small)
Eggplant
Garlic
Green beans
Lemon
Marrow (large)
Marrow (small)
Mushrooms
Orange
Onion (dry)
Onion (green)
Peas
Pepper (hot)
Pepper (sweet)
Potato
Tomato
String beans
Watermelon
Vine Leaves

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:00 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Sanaa (YV)
12:30 Rome, Brussels (RJ)
12:30 Paris (add) (RJ)
12:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:45 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:45 Aqaba, Paris (RJ)
13:45 Cairo (RJ)
21:00 London (RJ)
21:15 Larnaca (RJ)
21:30 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:30 Jeddah (RJ)
21:30 Damascus (RJ)
21:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

09:15 Beirut (ME)
12:30 Sanaa (YV)
13:50 Vienna (OA)
20:45 Dubai (EK)
23:25 Damascus, Paris (AF)
08:25 Amsterdam (KL)
01:15 Cairo (MS)

Government, committee differ over contradicting articles in sales tax law

By Natasha Bukhari
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The chairman of the Lower House of Parliament Financial Committee, Ali Abul Ragheb, is disappointed with what he calls the government's "unreasonable" opposition to the recommendations made by his committee to amend the draft sales tax law.

The government wants the draft legislation to be passed according to its own terms, and lawmakers would not accept this, Mr. Abul Ragheb said.

The law, which created a great deal of debate last year, is the main item on the agenda of the House's two-month extraordinary session that started April 17.

In the House's first session, Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputies urged the House to reject the draft law saying that it was imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and that it (the draft law) increases the tax burden on low income people.

In two sessions the House passed six articles of the draft law, Article 5, as passed following the recommendations of the Financial Committee stipulates that the taxed goods and services should be specified in lists attached to the law itself.

However, deputies approved another article that gave the government the right to specify the goods to be exempted from taxation, contrary to the Financial Committee's recommendation that the list be made part of the law itself rather than a flexible set of regulations.

According to Mr. Abul Ragheb, adding a clause to Article 6 gave the government "free hand to monopolise" the list of items exempted from the tax.

Mr. Abul Ragheb told the Jordan Times that the government had presented the House with a "double-stating" clause.

He urged the government not to amend the Financial Committee's recommendations because by doing so, "legal irregularities would follow as with Article 6 and 4." He said that deputies will have to review their votes on

the controversial articles when they vote on the law as a whole and expressed confidence that the lawmakers would vote in favour of the committee's recommendations.

Minister of Finance Sami Gammoh, however, told the Jordan Times Friday that deputies have to go back to Article 4 and amend it in order for Article 6 to be legally effective. Mr. Gammoh said that lawmakers should trust the government to make the "right" decision in regard to the list of items that are subject to taxation and those excluded from it.

He added that flexibility in taxation regulations ensures rapid adjustments when required to serve the country's economic and national interests.

"Specifying the exempted items and tying the list down to a law does not allow for any amendments that may be necessary in the future," the minister said.

Deputy Abdul Karim Kabarti, who is also in the House Financial Committee, told the Jordan Times that pragmatism rather than ideological inflexibility is needed in dealing with this issue.

"We have to judge matters by their end results and not by the means used to achieve those results," said Mr. Kabarti.

Mr. Kabarti described the House's debate on the draft legislation as a series of attacks and counterattacks, despite what he saw as the House's Financial Committee's efforts to base its recommendations on an all-encompassing study in which many parliamentary, governmental and political parties have been involved.

Mr. Kabarti, however, said that he expected the government to get its own way at the end of this dispute even if that was through the Upper House of Parliament, which, according to the constitution, can send back any draft law approved by the Lower House of Parliament if it is not satisfied with it.

Deputy Abul Ragheb, on the other hand, said that the government cannot afford to waste time as the draft law has been given the status of an emergency requirement by the IMF.



OFFICIAL DEPARTS — Mali President Alpha Conary Thursday concluded a three-day visit to Jordan during which he attended the funeral of the late Queen Mother and met with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan to discuss Mali-Jordanian relations and economic cooperation. The president was also guest of honour at the opening of a five-day conference organised by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC) where he delivered a brief address. During his stay in the Kingdom, the Mali president toured archaeological sites in Jerash, Ajloun and Amman in the company of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hassan. Upon his departure, the Mali president was seen off by Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Taher Al Masri, Cabinet members and high ranking officials.

Royal family accepts condolences

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Their Royal Highnesses the Princess and Sherif and the Royal Family members Friday accepted condolences from representatives of all walks of life who called at Raghadan Palace to offer their condolences over the death of the Queen Mother Zein Al Sharaf.

Condolences were accepted from tribal chiefs, representatives of voluntary societies, social and youth sectors, mayors, heads of village councils, provincial governors, banks and companies' managers.

Condolences were also conveyed by Palestinian delegations from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, representing all sectors of life.

Crown Prince Hassan also accepted condolences from director general and secretary general of the International Museums Conference.

At Basman Palace, Her Majesty Queen Noor, Their Royal Highnesses Princess Basma, Princess Taghrid, Princess Sarvath and Their Royal Highnesses the Princesses and Sherifs accepted condolences from director of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, representatives of Girls Scouts and Girl Guides at the Ministry of Education Schools and women delegations from various parts of Jordan.

They also accepted condolences from Sheikh Naifa Bint Khalifa, head of the Bahraini delegation to the "museums, civilisation and development" conference, currently held in Amman.

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Workshop discusses stemming pollution, desertification

RAMTHA (J.T.) — Topics which include air and water pollution and means to stem desertification and land issues related to industrial pollution are on the agenda of a four-day workshop currently held at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) in conjunction with the American University of Beirut (AUB).

Addressing the opening session Thursday, Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Ahmad Aqileb said that the rising danger of pollution from various sources has prompted Jordan to take drastic measures

to protect the environment and ensure sustainable development.

Recent years have brought with them serious dangers to the environment, which is being threatened by pollution, posed in the form of desertification, encroachment of construction operations on agricultural land, excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides, the ever increasing population growth, threats to surface and underground water resources and solid and liquid waste, among other dangers, said the minister in his address to delegates representing six Arab countries gathered at JUST.

Tarawneh represents Jordan at Nixon's funeral

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Prince Talal Bin Mohammad was not able to attend the funeral of former U.S. President Richard Nixon on behalf of His Majesty King Hussein bin Talal, due to the sad news of the death of Her Majesty Queen Zein Al Sharaf.

Representing Jordan at the funeral which took place in Yorba Linda, California, on April 27 was Jordan's ambassador to the U.S. Faysel Tarawneh.

World traffic week starts Monday Road accidents claim 90 lives in three months this year

AMMAN (Petra) — A total of 6,842 road accidents occurred in Jordan in the first three months of this year, causing the death of 90 people and the injury of 2,844 others, the Traffic Department announced Friday.

The department director, Brigadier Ahmad Dmour who made the announcement, said that most of the accidents were caused by people not abiding by traffic rules and speeding.

Speaking on the eve of Jordan's observance of the World Traffic Week, which starts Monday, Brig. Dmour said that a total of 24,799 road accidents occurred during 1993, resulting in the death of 440 people and the injury of 11,754 others. He added that 57 per cent of the accidents occurred in the Amman region.

Out of these numbers 16,555 resulted from vehicles colliding

and 1,497 involved cars hitting pedestrians, noted Brig. Dmour.

Brig. Dmour also noted that 61.2 per cent of the road victims last year and this year were children aged less than 15.

According to Brig. Khaled Aref, director of the Drivers and Vehicles Licensing Department, in the coming week his department would focus attention spreading awareness among the public concerning accidents in which people are hit by cars.

He said that in the past years such accidents accounted for nearly 20 per cent of the total number of accidents.

Brig. Aref said that the accidents are caused not only by speeding cars and motorists failing to abide by the rules but also by pedestrians who fail to cross the streets at the crossing

zones and the parents who fail to teach their children the traffic rules.

Brig. Aref said that the Interior Ministry, in cooperation with the concerned social sectors and the Jordanian Society for the Prevention of Road Accidents has worked out programmes and seminars in the course of a week-long campaign to spread awareness among the public in matters related to traffic rules.

According to Dr. Rawhi Sharif who represents the Jordanian Society for the Prevention of Road Accidents at the national committee for the traffic week, the road accidents have been on the increase lately and the observance of the week was necessary to draw public attention to the need to end the carnage and save lives and public property by abiding traffic rules on the roads.

Ten political parties call for end to Jordan-bound cargo inspection

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Ten Jordanian Islamist and leftist parties have joined hands to demand a total end to all inspections of Jordan-bound cargo as part of the enforcement of sanctions against Iraq and called on Arab, Islamic, non-aligned and African countries to support the Kingdom's stand.

In a rare joint statement, the 10 parties, including the powerful Islamic Action Front (IAF) and mostly leftist parties, did not directly refer to the agreement Jordan has reached with the U.S. to replace the sea-based inspections by a U.S.-led naval task force with a land-based sanctions verification regime.

But it rejected "any inspections in Jordanian territory, whether at sea or on land," as "an infringement of Jordan's sovereignty."

Official party spokesmen were not immediately available for comment, but party sources said the statement was deliberately left vague since the 10 groups, which espouse varying ideologies ranging from Islamic law, socialism, Baathism and pan-Arab nationalism, could not agree on a unified stand to reject the land-based verifications before the modalities of the arrangement were known.

The sources said some of the parties would not outrightly reject the land-based arrangement as long as it is conducted under the direct supervision of the United Nations with no American intervention while others did not want any inspections in any form of shape, they said.

"Some of the parties are aware that for the moment there is no escape from some kind of mechanism at Aqaba and they wanted to reflect that position in the statement," said one source.

"But there is unanimous agreement that the inspections are unacceptable to Jordan and should be rejected as a form of pressure aimed at the Kingdom and its people."

After a meeting with His Majesty King Hussein in London on Monday, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Washington would support, subject to some "fine tuning," the Jordanian proposal that Lloyds Register of London conduct the sanctions-verifications at the port of Aqaba.

Lloyds Register of London is described as a non-profit, independent international organisation with no political affiliations. The American acceptance of the proposal came after more than three years of Jordanian complaints that the sanctions were not only causing heavy economic losses to the kingdom but also reflected distrust of the Kingdom despite its record of adherence to U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The U.S. agreed to the proposal to change the sanctions regime nearly one month after Jordan made its return to peace talks with Israel contingent on an end to inspections.

The two-page statement of the 10 parties, issued Thursday, said the continued inspections were a "punchline for the stand that Jordan and its people adopted during the Gulf crisis" by calling for an Arab solution to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and refusing foreign intervention on Arab soil.

The inspections "constitute an aggression against the Jordanian people, who have paid a heavy price for the Gulf crisis in the form of poverty, high unemployment and social and economic problems," it said, adding that "Zionist domination" of the region through pressuring Jordan into signing peace agreements with Israel was the objective of the continued blockade of Aqaba.

The statement, a copy of which was made available to the Jordan Times, called on members of the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement and African countries to "make their voice heard" in support of the Jordanian rejection of the inspections which the parties described as piracy.

It also warned the United Nations, the Security Council, the United States and its allies which are party to the Red Sea inspections that the continued siege of Aqaba would only "deepen people's hostility."

The 10 parties which signed the statement control 20 seats, including the 16 of the Islamic Action Front, in the 80-member Lower House of Parliament.

The signatories to the statement were: The Islamic Action Front, the Jordanian People's Democratic Party, the Jordanian Socialist Democratic Party, the Jordanian Arab Socialist Party, the Jordan Arab Democratic Party, the Jordanian Popular Unity Party, the Jordanian Progressive Democratic Party, the Unionist Arab Democratic Party, the Jordanian People's Democratic Party and Al Mustakbal.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Iraq condoles King

AMMAN (Petra) — Iraqi president's special envoy Khalid Abdul Munim Rashid Al Janabi Friday left Amman at the end of a three-day visit during which he conveyed to His Majesty King Hussein condolences from the Iraqi president and people over the death of Queen Mother Zein Al Sharaf last week. Mr. Janabi, who is President Saddam Hussein's advisor, was received by King Hussein Thursday. The audience was attended by the Iraqi ambassador to Jordan.

Labour Day celebrations cancelled

AMMAN (Petra) — Labour Minister Khaled Al Ghazawi Friday said the Labour celebrations scheduled Sunday at Hussein Youth City are now cancelled in mourning over the death of Queen Mother Zein Al Sharaf. Mr. Ghazawi said the funds allocated for this celebration will be donated to Umm Al Hussein orphanage in true commitment to the noble message the late Queen Mother upheld. In a related development, Secretary General of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions Khalid Shreim requested all trade unions and trade union committees to cancel any celebrations for the Labour Day.

WHAT'S GOING ON

- ★ Lecture in Arabic entitled "Horizons of Economic Jordanian-Palestinian Relations" by Dr. Taher Kam'an at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.
- ★ Lecture in German (with translation into Arabic) entitled "Die Vetterin Juha's in Deutschland Und In Der Türkei" by Dr. Dieter Glade at Goethe-Institut at 6:00 p.m.
- ★ A one-day exhibition by artist Zaidan Ni'meh entitled "A Drawing of The Poems by Poet Abdul Wahab Bayati" at the Phoenix Gallery for Art and Culture (Tel. 695291).
- ★ Exhibition by artists Dr. Ali Ghoul, Hussein Dar'esh, Adnan Al Sharif, Abdul Hussein Tawaji, Salwan Abbas, and Hafez Al Droubi at Orfali Art Gallery (Tel. 826932).
- ★ Exhibition of women's home-made products (including ceramics, sweets and handicrafts) at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition by paintings by artist Bahijah Al Hakim at Alia Art Gallery (Tel. 639303).
- ★ Exhibition by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at the Italian Language Centre (9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.) (Tel. 669348).

The Indian Community living in Jordan

offers heartfelt condolences to
His Majesty King Hussein,
His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad,
His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan,
and Her Royal Highness Princess Basma
and other members of the Royal Family.
Over the passing of
Her Majesty Queen Zein Al Sharaf,
the Queen Mother
May her soul rest in peace

Agricultural roads targeted for 1995

AMMAN (Petra) — The slogan for 1995 of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing will be "Improvement of agricultural roads in Jordan" and allocations will be made to carry out the project, according to Minister of Public Works Abdul Razzak Ensour.

The Ministry of Public Works is in the process of contacting governors of various districts with the purpose of identifying the needs for agricultural roads to be built or the repair on the existing ones to be carried out, said Dr. Ensour at a meeting attended by directors of planning committees.

Once the information about these needs has been collected, work will start on preparations for the implementation of the projects, Dr. Ensour added.

Stressing that agricultural roads are the main pillars of the national economy, Dr. Ensour said that the ministry will make arrangements for including sufficient funds in the coming year's budget through the help of the ministries of finance and planning for the sake of implementing this vital projects.

Special attention, said the minister, will be given to roads linking the Jordan Valley region with the urban regions to help facilitate the transportation of agricultural produce.

In the course of implementing the project, the minister added, the Ministry of Public Works will cooperate with the Royal Engineering Corps of the Jordanian Armed Forces to carry out repair on machines and heavy road equipment currently being used by the ministry in opening the Zaza-Ghor Haditha road in the southern Jordan valley region.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Photo Competition

Organised by
The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature

On the occasion of Arbor Day, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature announces a photo competition, to feature nature in Jordan: Flowers, birds, trees or landscapes.

Conditions:

1. Each participant should provide between five and 10 slide-photos, printed, along with the negatives.
2. The size of the photo should not be smaller than 18 x 12 cm.
3. Photos are either in colour or black and white.
4. Last date for participation is 20/5/1994.
5. Results, prizes and certificates of the winners will be announced at a reception, and an exhibition will be held on the occasion of the World Environment Day, Sunday, 5/6/1994.
6. The prizes:

Flight ticket from Royal Jordanian
Flight ticket from Middle East Airlines
Camera (Yashica MF-2) presented by its agent Yacoub Berberian and Son Co.
Four metal Electra frames of excellent quality, 25x30 cm, presented by its Agent Yacoub Berberian and Son Co.
Citizen-watch presented by Michael Jewellery/Salt.

PS: Studio Haig, Agent of Mitsubishi Films, will also take part in this competition.

Board of Directors, Staff and Children of The American Community School

offer their heart felt condolences to
His Majesty King Hussein,
the Royal Hashemite Family and the
people of Jordan for the loss of
Her Majesty the Queen Mother
Zein Al Sharaf

Le Mirage ...



Recreation club membership is now open...

Whether tennis or swimming is your fancy, we've got the membership for you.

Facilities include outdoor heated swimming pool, three plexi-pave tennis courts, table tennis, club lounge and health and fitness gym with qualified instructors

Our internationally acclaimed British tennis coach, James Downing, has devised special programmes for beginners and intermediates starting at JD 20++ per month.

Join us at the complete club for leisure and fitness. Call Jalal Asaad for more details on 696511.

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Jordan Times

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Jordanian Perspective

No quid pro quo for Aqaba

By Dr. Musa Keilani

THE AMERICAN acceptance of Jordan's proposal that the sea-based inspections of Aqaba-bound cargo by a U.S.-led naval task force be replaced with a land-based regime has, in principle, removed a major hurdle in the Middle East peace process and offered a face-saving formula for both Jordan and the U.S.

The standoff, sparked after Jordan made it clear that its return to the peace talks hinged on an end to the damaging inspections by the enforcers of the international sanctions against Iraq, was long in the making. Our memories are fresh when James Baker, the secretary of state of the Bush administration, used to make promises after promises that the Kingdom's grievances would be looked into and addressed but with little happening on the ground.

Now that Warren Christopher, Mr. Baker's successor in a new administration, has announced in public after considerable foot-dragging that Washington would accept an Aqaba-based regime for verifying the sanctions, it is welcome news indeed.

But that does not mean we are roaring to get back to the peace negotiations with Israel. We would like to see what kind of modalities and mechanisms would accompany the arrangement. And that was precisely the reason behind His Majesty King Hussein's non-committal answers during the London press conference after meeting Mr. Christopher on Monday.

Our experience over the years has taught us that no one offers anything without strings attached and we are anxious to see that strings are attached to the Aqaba arrangement. For one thing, as Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali made clear a few hours before Mr. Christopher spoke on Monday, the Aqaba regime should not mean "inspections" because that would amount to an infringement on the sovereignty of the Kingdom.

Jordan has a record of total and complete respect for, and adherence to, the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council as a matter of principle. The "new world order,"

whose approach to Jordan is of a traditional carrot and stick, had better give us the credit that we deserve in this context and refrain from continued humiliation of Jordan as a country and Jordanians as a people.

Quite simply, Jordan should be trusted to adhere to the terms of the embargo on Iraq. To impose unacceptable conditions and terms for the presence of Lloyds Register, a neutral, international organisation of repute, at Aqaba and insist on "inspections" and "veto authority" would be counter-productive.

As Dr. Majali said Monday, Lloyds Register people are free to see the cargo unloaded at Aqaba when Jordan's customs department opens them for inspections, as warranted by the Kingdom's laws and regulations, and report to the U.N. Sanctions Committee of its "observations." We would not accept a situation when goods imported by a Jordanian for consumption in the local market or for use in local industries held back simply because the cargo is "suspect" and should receive the green signal from an external party before it could leave Aqaba port.

We hope that the repeated use of the word "inspections" by Mr. Christopher during his press conference in London on Monday was not a signal that Washington would insist on granting the Lloyds Register people the right to subject Jordanian imports to the whims of those waging an all-out campaign against Iraq and Jordan.

Hopefully, the days ahead will unfold the "technical modalities" and the "fine tuning" that the U.S. has been talking about in the context of the Aqaba verifications.

In the meantime, those anxious to see as little as possible in food and medicine to the Iraqi people should respect our government's finding that what they call front companies are legitimate Jordanian entities functioning within the confines of Jordanian laws and regulations. It is illogical to rule that the imports of those entities are subject to a blanket ban regardless of whether the cargo is exempt from the sanctions

or has the approval of the U.N. Sanctions Committee simply because someone, somewhere, believes that they are companies acting as "front, back or the middle" as our prime minister put it.

What our officials would not say in public, but we as Jordanians are free to say, is that the amount of Iraq-bound cargo flowing through other regional ports is six times of that coming through Aqaba. Yet we don't find any anxiety on anyone's part to have "inspections," "verification regime" or "observations" in place at any of those ports.

Beyond that, however, is the fact that the sanctions, when imposed, were aimed at forcing Iraq to satisfy the demands of the U.N. Security Council and definitely not at starving the Iraqi people. As such, food and medicine imports for Iraq through Aqaba, regardless of who imports them, should not be subject to the political whims and fancies of anyone and should not be used as a tool to achieve political purposes, whether in the context of Iraq or Jordan.

In the same vein, it is our sincere hope that Washington's acceptance of an Aqaba-based verification is not another stone of American pressure on Jordan to make "dramatic gestures" in the peace process. The problems that Jordan faces and the price we paid for the continued Red Sea inspections, and the Kingdom's principles that guide its quest for negotiated peace in the Middle East are two different issues by any standard.

It is not acceptable at all for anyone to suggest or insist that now that the U.S. has "magnanimously" accepted what, by all norms and laws, should not have been an issue of demand and compliance at all in the first place, Jordan should oblige Israel at the expense of its national rights. It is simply a no-go area and we hope those who want to storm the barriers and create fait accomplis realise and appreciate that Jordan is committed to negotiated peace, a peace that is honourable and meets the legitimate principles of international law and U.N. Security Council resolutions. Anything less than that is simply a non-starter.

S. Africa's new life

A NEW era has dawned on South Africa, the scene of decades long tension and turmoil between the black majority and the white minority, who ruled the country with an iron fist. With African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela becoming, as forecast, the new president of the country as a result of the four-day long elections in which a very high percentage of the eligible voters took part, it is the beginning of a national rebirth in which the right to self-determination for all the people of South Africa, irrespective of their colour or race, was exercised.

"We have now moved from an era of pessimism, turmoil and conflict into a new era of hope, reconciliation and nation-building," Mandela was quoted as saying on the occasion of the belated transformation of his country from slavery into freedom and liberty. It is noteworthy that his new vision for the future is one for reconciliation between the whites and blacks rather than one of confrontation between them.

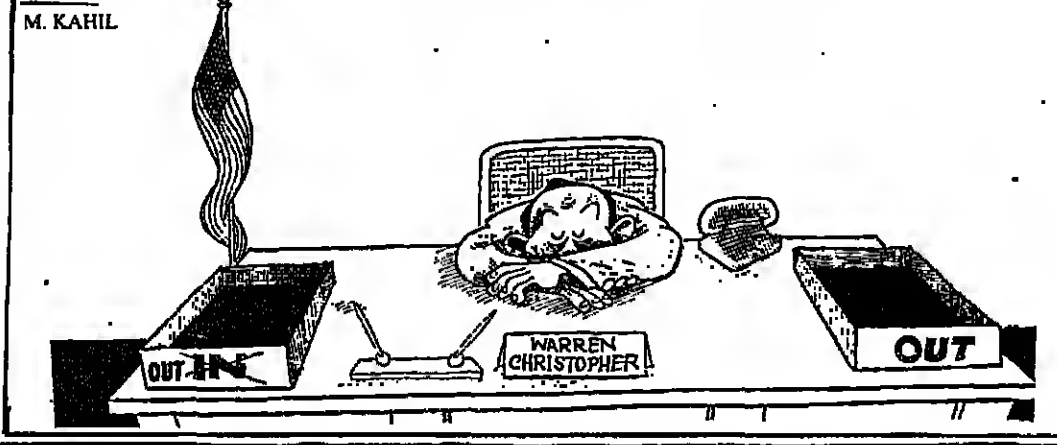
There is an obvious message in the newly emerging political story of South Africa. It is clearly one that strengthens the conviction in peoples' right to determine their political, economic and social future and vindicates all others who are still yearning for national salvation. It is also proof of the bankruptcy of making distinctions between people on the basis of colour, race or political opinion. The national liberation war that was successfully waged by the blacks of South Africa is one that deserves to be celebrated and commemorated by all the Third World, especially by peoples who are still struggling for freedom.

Still the political democratisation of South Africa is only the beginning of the new experience in the nation-building. Much more needs to be done as what lies ahead is even harder to accomplish. The new black-led government will inherit a national legacy of huge national debt and backlogs in housing, education and health care. Without the cooperation of the whites and the dismantling of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB), the road ahead would be strewn with booby-traps. At least Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi should lend his support to the new African leadership by putting aside his provincial concerns in favour of the overall national interests of all South Africans. The new South Africa needs all the support it could muster not only from all South Africans, be they white or Zulus, or otherwise, but also the whole world community who has a vested interest in getting rid of apartheid once and for all.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Dustour called on Arab countries to develop their relations with China at all levels and prevent Israel from damaging such relations in any form and under any circumstances. Taher Adwan said that the Arabs have big chances for opening their markets and their trade exchanges with China and have the opportunity to learn from this Asian giant how to develop at the social, political and economic levels. Since the middle of the 20th century, the Arabs and the Chinese have maintained very strong ties, and Beijing has always supported the Arab Nation's just causes, said the writer. We have to remember that when Israel had diplomatic ties with Islamic countries like Iran under the Shah, Beijing refused to recognise the Jewish state and supported the Arab rights. It is regrettable to see the Arabs failing to utilise such situation and to bolster trade, industrial and economic ties with China which is rising as a superpower at present, said the writer. While all indications point to the fact that China is fastly becoming a super economic power, the Arabs are still dragging their feet in matters related to bolstering their ties with Beijing, added the writer.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dustour expressed regret that Arab states are trying to end their conflict with Israel only to open the door wide for a conflict among themselves. Mohammad Kawash said the hostile powers are now trying to stir trouble for Arab countries to keep them at odds with one another and so help Israel to dominate their affairs. With weak mini-Arab states, Israel is guaranteed the upper hand in this region, and with the religious, ethnic and social conflicts rising within the Arab countries there can be no danger for the Jewish state, he said. The writer said that Israel and its allies are currently striving to prevent the Arabs from adopting a common stand with which they can abort Israel's objectives, and are desperately stirring internal conflicts to achieve these goals. Even those countries surrounding Israel have failed to adopt a coordinated position with regard to the peace process, and there is little hope that they would adopt a joint stand, said the writer. He expressed fear that the internal strife within the Arab World could spill over the border and pit some Arab countries in armed conflicts against one another.



THE WEEK IN PRINT

U.S. should follow words with deeds and lift Aqaba siege

Reviewed By Elia Nasrallah

ARABIC DAILY newspapers in the past week gave prominence in their editorials to the passing away of the late Queen Zain Al Sharaf, the Queen Mother, but also discussed the Middle East question and a host of domestic issues.

Commenting on the scheduled visit to the Middle East by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, a columnist in Al Dustour said that the U.S. official's tour could be more significant than any of his earlier visits following Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's announcement that Israel could remove settlements in the Golan in exchange for peace with Syria. But the settlement issue is not the only problem impeding the process of peace between Israel and Syria, said Taher Al Adwan. What Syria demands is total peace along all the tracks on the one hand and recognition of the Palestinian people's rights in their homeland on the other, said the writer.

The Arabs, said the writer, want the United States to play a genuine role in the peace process in order to implement U.N. resolutions but today Washington has not taken any concrete step in this direction.

Walid Abu Bakr, another columnist in Al Dustour, said that the United States is bound to give momentum to the peace process because it wants to protect credibility. But it seems that the United States is not concerned whether the outcome of the negotiations would be just for both parties, said the writer.

Noting that the Israelis are resorting to the carrot and the stick policy in its dealings with the Arabs ever since the start of the negotiations two years ago, the writer said that the Israeli leaders continually seek domination of the Arab region economically, militarily and politically.

Mohammad Kawash, another Al Dustour columnist, lauded a recent agreement between the Palestinian leadership and Hamas on the main points for ending Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. Both Hamas and Fateh are concerned with ending the occupation of Arab and it was natural for their leaders to conclude an agreement on cooperation to achieve that goal, said the writer.

Those casting doubt on Hamas' intentions are not helping the Palestinian cause, and one has to keep in mind that although Hamas is in the opposition camp with regard to means of achieving freedom for Palestinians its leaders have openly and clearly declared that resistance weapons can only be raised in the face of the Zionists, he added.

Al Ra'i daily commented on Mr. Christopher's announcement that the siege on Aqaba would end by paying tribute to His Majesty King Hussein's firm stand that helped bring about this favourable decision. The paper said that Washington's response to Jordan's demands was a result of the clear message by King Hussein that the Kingdom would not take part in further peace talks unless the siege has been lifted. Jordan, said the paper, is not violating the sanctions on Iraq and therefore has a strong point in this matter. It said that Washington has now removed the hurdle that impeded Jordan's participation in the peace process.

Commenting on Mr. Christopher's statements that Washington and Amman keep strong friendly relations, a columnist in Al Ra'i said that words are not enough.

Tareq Masarweh said Washington should prove by deeds rather than words its real friendship by ending the siege on Aqaba and respecting the national aspirations of the Arab people.

Jordan, said the writer, is part of the Arab World and feels closer to the other Arab countries than any foreign nation, and strives to protect Arab citizens and end injustices done to them. He said that neither the U.S. administration nor Mr. Christopher are really concerned about the real feelings of the Jordanian people and their national aspirations and therefore this can be by no means be friendly to the Kingdom.

Lawyer Hani Dahleh wrote an article in Al Dustour in which he stressed the significance of the professional unions in Jordan's politics.

Over the past four decades, the unions played a key role in Jordan's political arena and its members, who are doctors, engineers, pharmacists and lawyers, represent the cream of the intellectual sector of the country.

He criticised those voices which call for the unions to remain confined to their professional work and to leave the politics to the political parties.

A columnist in Al Dustour commented on a government ban on smoking inside government offices by saying that the order should have been coupled with a solution to the problem of smokers—who spend at least six hours in their offices.

Mohammad Daoud said that the way the ban was imposed by no means be implemented since the provision was made for creating places to the smokers to smoke. No doubt, he said, the smokers are bound to violate the rules. Voicing appreciation to the Health Ministry's drive to end the habit of smoking, the writer said unless smokers are allowed to smoke one way or another, their services to the public are bound to be adversely affected.

Salameh Ekour, a columnist in Sawt Al Shaab, said that the government seems to be convinced of the need to give raises to government employees but has no sufficient funds to do that.

The writer said that the government can indirectly help the limited-income groups, who are mostly government employees, by being firm against merchants who manipulate prices and the greedy traders who abide by no rules. He said that the government ought to impose stricter control on merchants who sell auto spare parts, electric appliances and food which all citizens need and ought to fix the rates of doctors and end the greed of hospitals in a manner that would help the ordinary citizen. If the government lacks sufficient funds for a raise to its employees said the writer, at least it can utilise its authority in order to reduce the burden on the Jordanian citizens.

Ahmad Dahbas, another columnist in Sawt Al Shaab, urged the government to introduce stricter measures designed to deter people from throwing waste from car windows. The writer said that appeals to the public to stop the bad habit have proved futile, and there was need for strict penalties to be imposed if we are to protect the environment and keep the streets and public squares clean and safe.

IMF official casts a line to Algiers

By Francis Ghille

Mr. Michel Camdessus, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has taken a huge gamble. So has General Liamine Zeroul, the Algerian head of state. If they fail, neither the IMF nor the Algerian army will have another chance to save north Africa's largest country from a fate which a senior U.S. official likened to one of "creeping Afghanistan".

Mr. Camdessus has asked the board of the IMF to extend a \$1bn (£680m) one-year standby loan to Algeria, which the board is expected to approve by the end of the month. He has called on Algeria's foreign creditors to follow the IMF and provide the country with a further \$8bn-\$9bn which it will need to pay its international way this year.

Of this total, \$3.5bn would come from the rescheduling of the principal repayments of debt owed to its sovereign creditors, who are due to meet at a Paris Club meeting in mid-May; \$1.5bn would come from the World Bank, African Development Bank and Arab Monetary Fund loans; \$1bn from the European Union; and the balance from export credits which would be maintained at last year's level.

Algeria has already been asked to take its medicine. Three weeks ago the price of nine staple foodstuffs—including flour, bread and milk—were increased by between 25 and 100 per cent. This followed similar rises in the cost of petrol and domestic fuel. Other increases are intended to follow.

The dinar has been de-

valued by 40 per cent and interest rates raised. Measures to liberalise foreign trade are expected this week. A later stage in the process will require state companies to shed excess labour.

Mr. Redha Malek, the prime minister since last August, announced last week he was resigning. Foreign observers do not agree on why. It may be that he disagreed with the policy now openly pursued by Gen. Zeroul of trying to talk to those members of the banned fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) who do not wish to see their country slide into total anarchy.

It may be that the head of state wanted to replace him with a technocrat who carries no political weight and whose job is that of the surgeon, a man who can be disposed of easily if the going gets rough.

Mr. Mokdad Sifi, who is taking over, certainly fits that description. He comes from Tebessa, a town close to the Tunisian border which has provided many key figures to the Direction Generale de la Securite Nationale, the fount of much power in Algeria over 30 years.

Days before Mr. Malek's departure, Mr. Camdessus had expressed, in an interview with Algerian state television, much enthusiasm and hope about the process of economic reform upon which he felt Algeria was embarking.

Many Algerians hope the IMF chief's judgment is better vindicated by events than it was after the last agreement with the Fund. That accord, signed in June 1991, was followed promptly by the dismissal of the then reform-

mist prime minister, Mr. Mouloud Hamrouche. Mr. Camdessus heaped praise on his successor, Mr. Sid Ahmad Ghazali, whose policies went on in effect to destroy the economic reforms to which the IMF had just given its imprimatur.

The position today is incomparably worse. Some 4,000 Algerians have died since elections, which the FIS was poised to win, were suspended in January 1992. Fierce repression has not prevented large areas of Algeria, including some cities, from slipping out of the state's control, notably at night. The "hardline" Islamic Armed Group is committing acts of terror on ordinary Algerians and has targeted foreigners, many of whom have fled the country.

Although this has helped bring Algeria's economy to its current state of semi-collapse, a main factor has been the fall in world prices of hydrocarbons, which account for 90 per cent of the country's foreign income. Foreign debt repayments would, in the absence of an agreement with the country's western creditors, absorb virtually all Algeria's forecast \$9bn income this year.

As they consider the possible fate of a reform package now being put together, the country's foreign creditors are, in the words of one senior European banker, "functioning on a wing and a prayer".

So are 26m Algerians. As one sardonically commented: "The difference is that we are risking our lives while Western countries are only risking their money."

The Financial Times.

The darker side of the legacy: a nation of cynics

By Jill Lawrence
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A dark side of Richard M. Nixon's legacy endures today in a nation of cynics. The Watergate deeds that led to his forced resignation deepened and solidified the public mistrust bequeathed by his predecessor.

Lyndon B. Johnson's deceptive accounts of the Vietnam war opened a yawning credibility gap. Then came Mr. Nixon's White House, crossing the line into criminal conduct with the Watergate scandal.

Mr. Nixon was the only U.S. president to resign. He quit after a break-in at the Watergate Hotel in Washington unleashed a scandal over harassment of his political opponents, taped telephone conversations and obstructing investigators.

"Watergate was a watershed. It turned presidents into potential crooks," said sociologist Todd Gitlin, author of "The Sixties." Mr. Nixon's duplicity aggravated a "fundamental cultural malaise" marked by the conviction that whatever appears in public is a facade, said sociologist Jeffrey Goldfarb, author of "The Cynical Society."

"He was to his core a cynical person," said Mr. Goldfarb, a professor at the New School for Social Research. "He taught the nation to be very, very wary about the articulation of any ideal, because all ideals seemed to be absolutely vacuous."

A whole range of social and political consequences ensued from the three-syllable word that's now shorthand for all that is corrupt and corrosive in government. Not least of them is the permanent shadow of impeachment on the political landscape.

"Before Watergate, the notion of a presidential impeachment was from the dark ages, the 19th century. No one thought about it," said Michael Schudson.

Mr. Schudson, a sociology professor at the University of California at San Diego, said political leaders didn't mention impeachment for almost a year into the Watergate affair. But it came up within days of the first revelations in the Reagan administration's Iran-Contra scandal. It's even been mentioned by some politicians in connection with the current Whitewater affair.

"That's ridiculous, but that is a legacy of Watergate," Mr. Schudson said. "We are ready to suspect that any little thread we find is going to lead to a whole roomful of horrors."

Other parts of the legacy include an aggressive press corps inspired by the investigative work that unraveled Watergate, and a strengthened freedom of information act opening government business to public scrutiny.

In addition, the U.S. Congress passed a law to create the special prosecutors who investigate potential government scandals.

Americans have demonstrated at the polls that they yearn for a president they can trust. They elected Jimmy Carter in 1976 at least partly on the strength of his promise that he would never lie to them. But he proved to be a weak leader.

The country next turned to Ronald Reagan, whose forceful optimism did give the White House a temporary boost. The Harris level of confidence was up to 42 per cent in 1984 but fell to 17 per cent in 1988, after the Iran-Contra disclosures. And That's about where Bill Clinton finds the presidency today.

Mediators push for Bosnia truce amid fears of new front

SARAJEVO (R) — Western and Russian mediators met Bosnia Serbs Friday to urge them to agree a truce with the Muslim-led government as fears grew that fresh fighting could break out in the north between the warring sides.

The "contact group" led by U.S. Ambassador Charles Redman and Russian envoy Aleksandr Nikiforov, talked for two hours with the Bosnian Serb leadership at Pale outside Sarajevo. They refused to comment afterwards on the outcome.

The group faces the uphill task of bridging Serb insistence on a permanent ceasefire and Muslim demands for a shorter truce lasting only two or three months.

It met Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic in the Bosnian capital Thursday.

"The first thing on the agenda, as we see it on our side, is to have a cessation of hostilities as soon as possible," Jean Pierre Massat, the Geneva conference on ex-Yugoslavia representative in the group, said in Sarajevo.

Mr. Izetbegovic said his government would back a temporary ceasefire of two to three months to allow time for peace negotiations to settle territorial disputes.

But the Serbs, who control 70 per cent of Bosnia, are arguing for a permanent ceasefire. The Bosnian government says this would allow the Serbs to hold on to captured land while stalling on a final peace settlement.

As the contact group met the Serbs, peace mediators Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg had talks in Norway with Russian special envoy Vitaly Churkin on former Yugoslavia.

If the contact group makes progress, the U.S., Russia, France, Britain and Germany could begin negotiations next week on a joint policy towards the Bosnian conflict and the lifting of U.N. sanctions against Serbian-led rump Yugoslavia.

The initiative follows international efforts, including the threat of NATO air strikes, which halted a Serb assault on the Muslim town of Gorazde in east Bosnia at the weekend.

But there are fears that without swift action to build on a current lull, fresh fighting could break out between Serbs and Muslims in northern Bosnia.

The Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) has accused the Muslim forces of preparing an assault on the corridor across northern Bosnia which joins Serb possessions in the east and west of the former Yugoslav republic.

The United States said intelligence reports showed the BSA was moving men and weapons to the area around Brcko, the weakest point in the corridor.

Meanwhile, U.N. Protection Force spokesman Eric Chaperon said more peacekeeping troops were being sent to Gorazde.

A British company of 100 to 150 men was expected to head for Gorazde Friday in Saxon armoured vehicles, together with a headquarters unit and combat engineers who would start clearing mines around the town's water-supply plant.

Mr. Chaperon said a Ukrainian company was also being readied to leave in the next day or so. There are currently about 500 U.N. soldiers in Gorazde.

In Zagreb, Croatia accused rebel Serbs holding a third of its territory of not complying with the terms of a U.N.-brokered ceasefire and called on the international community to exert pressure on them.

Hrvoje Sarinic, chief Croatian negotiator in talks on the rebel-held Krajina region, said in a letter to U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi that Serbs had failed to withdraw heavy weapons from a 20-kilometre zone along part of the 1,600 kilometre (1,000 miles) demarcation line.

Sarinic also accused the Serbs of failing to pull back infantry as required and refusing to accept deployment of joint police patrols in buffer zones.

A U.N. spokesman admitted there were problems with the implementation of the month-old ceasefire, but said they did not jeopardise the peace process.

Refugees flood out of Rwanda

MULINDI, Rwanda (R) — A tide of Rwandan refugees poured into neighbouring Tanzania Friday, fleeing massacres and civil war as aid workers raced to save hundreds of thousands of displaced people from starvation in Rwanda's chaos.

Aid agency officials said up to 200,000 Rwandans arrived in northwestern Tanzania Thursday and Friday and a long column of men, women and children were still fleeing southeastern Rwanda.

"This is a major humanitarian disaster. We expect the number to swell to over 500,000," said Sheila Wilson, chief delegate for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Tanzania.

"We cannot cope. We need transport, storage facilities and manpower," said Adam Kimbisa of the Tanzanian Red Cross.

Aid workers said many refugees were crossing Rusizi Bridge into Tanzania as Tanzanian troops had stopped guarding it and Rwanda's side of the frontier was no longer sealed by Rwandan troops.

"The security situation in southern Rwanda is worsening

and the border has opened up so these huge numbers are arriving," said an official of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

He said UNHCR had enough blankets and shelter material in position for the refugees in Tanzania and was sending more staff and arranging land convoys and airlifts of food.

Before the flood of refugees to Tanzania, a total of 20,000 Rwandans had reached Tanzania, 38,000 fled to Burundi, 5,500 escaped to Uganda and 3,500 had taken refuge in Zaire, the UNHCR said.

In addition, 175,000 Burundian refugees in camps in Rwanda returned home after the start of massacres and renewed civil war following the death of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi in a rocket attack on their plane near Rwanda's capital on April 6.

U.N. and aid officials say the slaughter in Rwanda now in its fourth week, especially massacres of members of the minority Tutsi tribe by Hutu troops and extremist militiamen, amounts to a campaign of genocide.

Aid agencies estimate the death toll at 100,000 but fear it is considerably more. Piles of rotting corpses are fouling water supplies, threatening a double disaster for survivors of the butchery.

Many of the more than 40,000 refugees, mostly Tutsis, who crossed the Burundian and Zairean borders have told horrific stories of troops and militiamen trying to hunt them down.

Aid workers said many had been deliberately maimed and had gruesome wounds from machetes, axes and knives.

They said the easiest frontier for refugees to cross was Uganda but relatively small numbers had fled there as most felt safe in areas held by the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF).

Fighting rock suburb of Burundi capital

Meanwhile, shelling and shooting rocked a suburb of the Burundian capital of Bujumbura overnight and Friday apparently at the start of an army campaign to disarm gunmen by force.

Yeltsin foes: Peace pact is propaganda

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin's political foes charged Friday that a civil accord signed by about 200 leaders was a "propaganda campaign" orchestrated by the Kremlin and said it lacked concrete applications.

"This declaration, despite its solemn signatures, in reality changes nothing in the life of Russia," charged members of the Accord for Russia Movement, a broad-based opposition coalition that includes Mr. Yeltsin's arch rival, former Vice-President Alexander Rutskoy.

"We are ready to seek accord on the basis of concrete actions and not by participating in an extraordinary propaganda campaign whose slogans and watchwords serve to cover up impotent and destructive policies," they said in a statement released at a news conference.

Russia's political, social and religious leaders signed Thursday a pact on social accord, an agreement proposed by Mr. Yeltsin to lay ground rules for political conduct up until the 1996 presidential election.

Signatories pledged to refrain from calling for early elections and pushing for amendments to Mr. Yeltsin's new post-Soviet constitution. Two demands that led to a violent uprising by the former headline parliament last October.

Leaders of the Communist Party, the conservative Agrarian Party and the reformist Yabloko Bloc refused to sign the pact.

Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov and Agrarian leader Mikhail Lapsin have joined Accord for Russia and plan to hold a founding conference on May 19 during which delegates were to issue a rival declaration on civic accord.

In the statement, opposition leaders stressed that Mr. Yeltsin's peace pact would lead to "the collapse of the scientific-industrial complex in the country, large-scale plundering of state property and of the treasury, degradation of our people and the destruction of our national religion and culture."

"Today, we must first of all agree on a change in the course of government that would include, as a priority, measures to save Russia," they added.

The statement was presented to the press by Mr. Zyuganov, Mr. Lapsin, nationalist deputy Sergei Baburin, centrist Stanislav Govorukhin, deputy speaker of the upper house of parliament, Pyotr Romanov and a Rutskoy supporter, Vladimir Lipitsky.

Mr. Lipitsky said that although Rutskoy did not attend the news conference, he was aware of the contents of the statement denouncing the Yeltsin pact and "fully supported" it.

Mr. Baburin called for the resignation of Duma speaker Ivan Rybkin, who signed the Yeltsin accord on behalf of the lower house of parliament, but Mr. Zyuganov and Mr. Lapsin disagreed.

Supporters of the pact had said it was important that it be signed ahead of May Day Sunday, after anti-government protests that turned into riots on the holiday last year, left a policeman dead and nearly 600 people injured.

Meanwhile, investigators from the United States, France and Taiwan, as well as 950 Japanese police, continued to search for the cause of the crash Tuesday night at Nagoya Airport.

Japanese investigators said they found no sign of an explosion in either engine of the Airbus A300-600R that slammed to the ground and burst into flames after the pilot radioed in that he was going to try landing again.

Japan's Ministry of Transportation said the maker of the plane's engines, Pratt and Whitney, had been ordered by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration in 1991 to improve the design of the compressor blades.

A ministry official said it was not yet known whether the engines on the plane, bought in January 1991, had actually been updated as required under the order.

Mass funeral held for Japan crash victims

TOKYO (AP) — Relatives of Taiwanese victims of the China Airlines jet crash that killed 265 people earlier this week held a mass funeral Friday, and police said they have identified a woman who survived the crash but had been unconscious.

The survivor — one of only eight people spared when the jet slammed into the ground and burst into flames — was identified as Mina Sofia Uchihashi, a 21-year-old Philippine citizen, according to police in Aichi, the prefecture in central Japan where the crash occurred Tuesday.

Mrs. Uchihashi was identified by her Japanese husband, who had been searching for her at a morgue set up next to the airport where the jet crashed in a failed landing attempt.

Another 38 bodies were identified at the morgue by Friday afternoon, leaving eight still unknown.

Mrs. Uchihashi suffered broken ribs and intestinal ruptures. The other survivors — five Japanese and two Taiwanese — also are hospitalized with serious injuries. She regained consciousness briefly Thursday night, but doctors said she was sleeping Friday and heavily sedated.

The flight from Taipei was carrying 256 passengers and 15 crew members. Most of the passengers were from Japan and Taiwan, though 17 Filipinos and one South Korean were also aboard.

Families of the Taiwanese passengers killed in Thursday's crash gathered Friday morning for a mass funeral, many kneeling beside coffins draped with shiny, gold-coloured cloth.

A Buddhist monk chanted prayers for the dead and burned incense sticks to placate their souls.

Japan's cabinet provokes mistrust, election calls

TOKYO (R) — Ministers in Japan's new minority government woke up Friday to the depressing news that much of the country had written them off before they even started work.

"It's sad but we can't find words for a government that lost the people's confidence before it was formed," said the influential Asahi Shimbun in an editorial.

After helping elect Tsutomu Hata as prime minister, the Socialist Party left the coalition in a bluff Monday after conservative coalition members grouped together to try to marginalise their left wing partners.

This left Mr. Hata heading Japan's first minority government for nearly four decades, and many analysts blame him and his close allies, especially the shadowy Ichiro Ozawa, for causing the split.

They say it was the result of taking a power game too far, and indicated they made light of their responsibilities as government leaders of the world's second biggest economy.

"The Hata government has completely betrayed our hopes," Asahi said.

Nihon Keizai Shimbun, a newspaper for business executives, said the government would not be able to get anything done.

"It is impossible to expect anything from the minority Hata cabinet on big policy issues," it said in an editorial.

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Mr. Hata said he wanted to reopen stalled trade talks with the United States aimed at reducing Japan's vast trade surplus, though he added that now was not the time to visit Washington to break the deadlock.

Japan cabinet provokes mistrust, election calls

TOKYO (R) — Ministers in Japan's new minority government woke up Friday to the depressing news that much of the country had written them off before they even started work.

"It's sad but we can't find words for a government that lost the people's confidence before it was formed," said the influential Asahi Shimbun in an editorial.

After helping elect Tsutomu Hata as prime minister, the Socialist Party left the coalition in a bluff Monday after conservative coalition members grouped together to try to marginalise their left wing partners.

This left Mr. Hata heading Japan's first minority government for nearly four decades, and many analysts blame him and his close allies, especially the shadowy Ichiro Ozawa, for causing the split.

They say it was the result of taking a power game too far, and indicated they made light of their responsibilities as government leaders of the world's second biggest economy.

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U.S. marshalls escort Aldrich Ames (centre) out of federal court after he pleaded guilty to espionage and tax evasion charges and was sentenced to life in prison (AFP photo)

'Most damaging spy' gets life sentence in U.S.

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — Aldrich Ames, the highest-paid and highest-ranking Russian spy ever caught inside the CIA, was sentenced to life in prison without parole in what a prosecutor called "the most damaging spy case in the history of this country."

Mr. Ames, 52, pleaded guilty without a trial and admitted being paid \$2.5 million by the Soviet Union and then Russia since April 1985 for U.S. secrets.

Once head of counterintelligence in the CIA's Soviet-East Europe section, Mr. Ames admitted disclosing the identities of 10 Russian officials and one East European who were spying for the United States or Great Britain.

Prosecutors said at least four Soviet KGB or GRU (military intelligence) agents among the 11 were executed.

"He traded people's lives for \$2.5 million," U.S. attorney Helen Fahey said.

In Moscow, President Boris Yeltsin charged the United States had turned the Ames case into an anti-Russian political campaign, according to remarks published Thursday.

He told Russian intelligence officers that the United States is increasing its spying in Russia, but thinks Russia has no right to do the same in the United States.

Mr. Ames said he never learned the fate of those he betrayed. But reading his first public statement since his Feb. 21 arrest, Ames expressed "deepest sympathy" for those "who may have suffered from my actions."

He professed "profound shame and guilt" for "this betrayal of trust, done for the basest motives" — money to pay debts.

Nevertheless, Mr. Ames told the court, he did not believe he had "noticeably aided" the United States or "noticeably aided" Moscow.

But prosecutors said in court papers, "Ames' compromise of these penetrations of the Soviet military and intelligence services deprived the United States of extremely valuable intelligence material for years to come."

Ames' Colombian-born wife, Rosario, 41, also pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit espionage and evade income taxes. The government said she aided and supported her husband's treachery without ever handling or transmitting secrets to the Russians.

U.S. District Judge Claude Hilton deferred her sentencing until Aug. 26 so the government has time to see whether Mr. Ames fulfills his agreement to tell investigators everything he disclosed, how he operated and any help he may have received.

In another part of the deal, the Ameses agreed to give the government any future payments they might earn for the sale of their stories and all their assets.

Mr. Ames said in April 1985 he sold the Soviet KGB the identities of several Soviet citizens who appeared to be working for the CIA inside the Soviet Union, but whom he believed actually were still loyal to the KGB.

Months later, "I did something which is still not entirely explicable even to me. Without preconditions or any demand for payment, I volunteered to the KGB information identifying virtually all Soviet agents of the CIA and other American and foreign services known to me," Mr. Ames said, adding that he was surprised when the KGB paid him \$2 million.

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Seoul rebuffs North's offer; urges nuclear inspections

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea Friday rejected a North Korean call to replace an existing armistice with a peace treaty, urging Pyongyang to allow full outside inspections of its nuclear facilities.

"Resolution of the nuclear problem is the priority task," the South's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

No peace treaty was signed at the end of the Korean war, 1950-53, only an armistice, meaning that technically both sides are still at war.

But Seoul accused Pyongyang of making the proposal to "blur the core issue of the (nuclear) problem."

"The issue of establishing a new mechanism guaranteeing peace as proposed by the North is one that should be settled between South and North Korea, not between the U.S. and North Korea," it said.

The statement followed reports from New York that North Korea hinted at accepting additional nuclear checks demanded by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"We are willing to exceptionally allow one more inspection after watching the attitude of the U.S. and the IAEA," local newspapers quoted Pak Gil-Yon, the North's U.N. envoy, as saying.

The envoy did not elaborate

out his remarks were seen here as indicating Pyongyang might allow IAEA inspectors to check a controversial radioactive laboratory, which the IAEA says is a nuclear reprocessing facility.

In March, Pyongyang barred IAEA inspectors from the lab.

Aside from the lab, North Korea has invited the Vienna-based nuclear watchdog to witness the replacement of fuel rods at a five-megawatt reactor in Yongbyon.

Unconfirmed press reports here said the IAEA had accepted the proposal on condition that they be later allowed to sample the fuel rods to estimate the amount of plutonium the North might have stashed for manufacturing weapons.

On Thursday, U.S. and North Korea officials met in New York for the first time in two months to discuss the nuclear standoff.

The U.S. side said it would scrap a U.S.-South Korea joint military exercise, Team Spirit, scheduled in November, and would resume high-level talks with Pyongyang, if the latter reached an agreement on inspections with the IAEA.

In its proposal for a peace treaty Thursday, Pyongyang demanded talks be held with Washington on ending decades of cold war hostility between the two sides and bury the past.

Berlusconi gets nod to form government

ROME (AP) — Holding onto his empire of TV networks, at least for now, Silvio Berlusconi will tackle the task of forming Italy's first postwar conservative-led government by breaking with another tradition.

Mr. Berlusconi said he would begin Monday to lay the groundwork for his government by first sounding out labour and industrial leaders about Italy's recession-hit economy, then would come the turn of politicians.

Mr. Berlusconi's probable coalition partners are the anti-bureaucratic Northern League and the National Alliance, heirs to Benito Mussolini's political legacy who shortly before the election disavowed their neo-fascist roots.

Some of his allies, however, are worried that Mr. Berlusconi's vast media, merchandising and real estate holdings would pose potential conflicts of interest.

But the tycoon made plain that he wasn't about to relinquish control of the sprawling interests that made him one of the richest men in Italy.

"There already is an anti-trust law," to cover such matters, Mr. Berlusconi said, adding there were no immediate plans to sell any of his networks. But critics have contended that that law was tailor-made for Mr. Berlusconi, allowing him to keep his three networks, which dominate the private airwaves.

With his Fininvest Stations' chief competitor consisting of the three channels of RAI state TV, running the country would mean Mr. Berlusconi could have influence on most of what Italians watch on their screens, from entertainment to talk shows, to newscasts.

Also in his empire are the country's largest newsweekly, Panorama, and the winningest major league soccer team, AC Milan. It also includes a supermarket chain that spans Italy, Malta and Slovenia.

Berlusconi-run publicity companies advertise the supermarkets' merchandise, and there are cinemas and film production and real estate companies.

President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro summoned Mr. Berlusconi Thursday to the presidential palace on the Quirinal Hill and asked him to put together Italy's 53rd postwar government.

Mr. Scalfaro was widely expected to name Mr. Berlusconi, after parliamentary elections last month in which Mr. Berlusconi's fledgling coalition ended a half-century of Christian Democrat dominance.

Mr. Berlusconi said his government would immediately create a kind of watchdog panel made up of three jurists — already chosen by him — to come up "with a formula to guarantee" no conflict of interests. He wasn't specific, but pledged his government would be "scrupulously impartial" in its workings.

"Balance and good sense — this will be style of government that the premier will have to guarantee to his allies, to parliament and to the country," Mr. Berlusconi said.

His plan for the three watchdogs drew a quick thumbs down from parliament's largest opposition group, the former Communists, a few hours before Mr. Berlusconi's nomination, Achille Occhetto, that party's leader, signed a petition in a drive to get a voter referendum to revamp anti-trust laws.

Mr. Berlusconi's conservative alliance has a majority in the lower Chamber of Deputies, but fell just short of the majority in the Senate.

Mr. Berlusconi's own party before the election, known as Forza Italia (Go, Italy), the party's leadership draws heavily from his business associates.

One potential stumbling block is allies' demands for key cabinet posts. Northern League leader Umberto Bossi quickly reiterated claims on the Interior, Treasury, Industry and other ministries.

Mr. Berlusconi's appointment at the presidential palace was carried live by one of his networks, which, while viewers waited for word on whether he had gotten the nod from Mr. Scalfaro, ran scenes of Mr. Berlusconi victorious on election night.

One of the guarantees that his networks would properly transmit information, promised Mr. Berlusconi, would be the "professionalism" of its managers and journalists.

The businessman also promised to make government "less invasive but more efficient."

Top British cop caught speeding at his own men

LONDON (R) — A top British police officer was caught speeding by his own men on the day they began a campaign to enforce speed limits, newspapers reported Friday. Chief Constable Keith Povey, head of the Leicestershire Police Force in central England was caught driving at 80 miles (128 kilometres), per hour in a 50 miles (80 kilometres) an hour zone. Chief Povey, 51, who told officers to treat him like any other motorist, was ordered to appear in court next month. He could face a driving ban. A new campaign against speeding has launched across Britain, using a graphic television commercial showing a young girl being knocked down and killed.

Michael English big winner at Gospel awards

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (AP) — Michael English was named artist of the year and top male vocalist Thursday night at the Gospel Music Association's 25th annual Dove Awards. "I can't believe this is happening," a stunned English told the audience at the Grand Ole Opry House. He also won for Best Contemporary Album for Hope. Steven Curtis Chapman won three awards: songwriter of the Year, Contemporary Song for Go Where With You, and Best Long-Form Video for The Live Adventure. "Thanks to all of you who have planted seeds in me," he told the audience. Twila Paris won top female vocalist for the second straight year. In Christ Alone, written by Shawn Craig and Don Koch, was voted Song Of The Year, and the quartet Point of Grace was named Best New Artist. Awards were announced in 34 categories during a live two-hour broadcast on cable TV's the Family Channel. Winners were chosen by 3,000 members of the Gospel Association. The honours, known as the Academy Awards of Gospel Music, are called the Dove Awards in reference to the bird mentioned in the Bible.

Briton stripped of doctorate for cheating

LONDON (R) — Britain's prestigious Oxford University has stripped former student of his doctorate after he was accused of plagiarism — only the second time this century the institution has taken such a step. Garry Owen Hughes, who studied at Oxford's Trinity College from 1982 to 1986, lost the title after his former supervisor was alerted to similarities between Mr. Hughes' thesis and one published in the United States, a university spokeswoman said. "I had been surprised by the great improvement in Garry's work but I suppose I attributed this to my teaching," the Daily Telegraph newspaper quoted Professor Jack Pole as saying. Mr. Hughes, who now works in insurance in Philadelphia but comes from western England, is accused of copying parts of a Princeton University text into his doctorate thesis, "the redefinition of Pennsylvania politics 1740-90," the spokeswoman said. She said it was very rare for university diplomas to be withdrawn and officials knew of only one other such case at Oxford this century.

Part of frame of The Scream found in Norway

OSLO (R) — Part of the frame of the stolen Norwegian masterpiece The Scream has been found in what could be a cryptic sign of the thieves' work, the National Gallery said. But the bizarre find of the 95 cm (37 inch) long piece of gilt-covered wood at a disused bus stop outside Oslo also stirred fears that the 1893 painting by Norway's Edvard Munch, one of the best-known in the world, may have been damaged. "It's extremely difficult to evaluate the importance of the find. But it must have been planted there... It indicates that they are trying to establish contact," Knut Berg, director of the National Gallery, told Reuters. The Scream, showing a waif-like figure wide-mouthed in terror beneath a blood-red sky, was stolen from the National Gallery on Feb. 12, the day of the opening of the Lillehammer Olympics. "It's a fragile painting. Rumours that it had been taken out of the frame have now been confirmed. That makes us awfully nervous," Mr. Berg said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Arafat to enter Jericho in June'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat should enter the West Bank town of Jericho in the first week of June, a senior Israeli negotiator said Friday. "There is nothing to stop Yasser Arafat going to Jericho as soon as the autonomy agreement is signed on Wednesday," said the official who refused to be named. "But he will not wait until the first week of June when the Israeli army has completed its withdrawal and redeployment," the negotiator told journalists aboard a return flight to Tel Aviv from Cairo where an agreement to launch autonomy was reached on Thursday. The official also confirmed that besides freeing 5,000 Palestinian prisoners after the agreement is signed, Israel and the PLO had decided that Palestinians opposed to the peace process could also be released from jail. But he explained: "We are ready to envisage such releases only if the prisoners make a written commitment (renouncing violence) and if their hands are not stained with (Israeli) blood." Negotiations would continue on the fate of the 9,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, he said.

Observers to deploy in Hebron on May 8

TEL AVIV (AFP) — International observers for Hebron will be officially deployed in the West Bank town from May 8, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Friday. Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreed to the 160-strong "temporary presence" in a bid to help improve security for Palestinians after a Jewish settler massacred more than 30 Muslims in Hebron on Feb. 25. An agreement specifying the mandate of the 90 Norwegian, 35 Danish and 35 Italian will be signed in Copenhagen on Monday, spokesman Raphael said. The observers would arrive next Thursday and begin deploying three days later, the spokesman said, but he said in Sarajevo did not give a breakdown of the figures.

Iran says it will stage rally in Mecca

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran on Friday insisted it would stage an "anti-pagan" rally in Mecca this year despite what it said was a Saudi Arabian ban. Tehran Radio quoted the official who will lead Iran's pilgrim contingent as saying there was a "divine injunction" to perform the ceremony, which is traditional for Shiite Muslims. The official, Hajjollah Mohammad Rezaei, said the religious aspects of the pilgrimage should not be divorced from the political ones. Usually, the Iranians have chanted anti-American and anti-Western slogans during the rallies. Hajjollah Mohammad Rezaei said the Saudis had banned the ceremony this year. It was not clear whether he was referring to the traditional ban on political activity, which is reiterated annually, or whether he was referring to a new — so far unpublished — Saudi ban.

300 feared dead in Mombasa disaster

MOMBASA, Kenya (AFP) — Some 300 people were believed to have died when a ferry connecting Mombasa island with the southern mainland sank early Friday, the official Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) reported. The Mtwara ferry was carrying 300 people, most of them commuters heading for work on the island, when it sank into the Indian Ocean. The ferry's maximum capacity is 150 people. There was no word on why the vessel sank. Some 50 bodies had already been recovered and transported to the city's morgue, witnesses said. Mombasa currently has only two ferries connecting the city to the southern mainland — the Mtwara ferry and the Likoni ferry.

Two British officials held in arms swoop

LONDON (R) — Two British Defence Ministry officials were held on Friday after large amounts of arms and ammunition were found in raids across the country. "Significant amounts of arms and ammunition have been recovered," a Ministry of Defence spokesman said. "At the moment there is no link with sales to terrorist organisations." The two were arrested on Thursday as a result of an internal investigation by the ministry and inquiries are continuing, the spokesman said. Both worked for the ministry's procurement division in London. Radio reports said the arrests followed two separate investigations, one into irregular arms contracts and another into the theft of weapons due to be disposed of. In a raid on the house of one of the officials in St. Albans, central England, two army trucks were used to take away large quantities of automatic rifles, pistols and ammunition, neighbours told reporters. Other simultaneous raids in Yorkshire, Northeast England, and in Essex, east of London, involved surplus military equipment earmarked for disposal.

Khmer Rouge wants talks outside Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (AP) — Prospects for holding peace talks have dimmed as the Khmer Rouge guerrilla group said it would attend only if the talks were held at a "neutral" site. Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh had said earlier this week the talks could not be held outside Cambodia because they concerned the country's internal affairs. Officials made available Friday the text of a letter from Khmer Rouge President Khieu Samphan to King Norodom Sihanouk, who proposed holding the talks next week. The letter, dated Wednesday, said that, "in the current situation in which insecurity reigns throughout Cambodia, only a neutral place can provide conditions for the round-table meeting to proceed in an atmosphere of cordiality, national reconciliation and equality for all Cambodian sides."

China slams Clinton-Dalai Lama meeting

BEIJING (R) — China on Friday sharply criticised the U.S. president and vice-president for meeting the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, accusing them of a "serious interference" in China's internal affairs. "We demand that the U.S. side live up to its commitments on recognising Tibet as part of China's territory, abide by the basic norms governing international relations, set store by the overall interests of Sino-U.S. relations and refrain from taking actions interfering in China's internal affairs and hurting the feelings of the Chinese people," an angry statement from the Foreign Ministry said. President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore met the Dalai Lama on Thursday and discussed religious and cultural rights in Tibet with the 1989 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, the White House said.

Israel built a giant 'hummos gun'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel developed a giant peashooter to fire chickpeas up to 40 metres to try to control Palestinians during the early days of the intifada, the army weekly revealed Friday. However, the idea was abandoned by a special military department which studies riot dispersal because it was ineffective, the Bamahane magazine said. Soldiers in the department dubbed the machine, the "hummos gun," after the paste made of chickpeas eaten with virtually every meal in Israel. The army also toyed with the idea of firing glue on protesters to pin them down, but tests were a failure, the department chief Colonel Herzl said. The weekly did not give his family name for security reasons.

Li signs friendship treaty with Mongolia

ULAN BATOR (AFP) — China and Mongolia signed a landmark treaty of friendship and cooperation here Friday, replacing an obsolete 1960 accord and formalising the basis for future bilateral ties after a 30-year rift. The treaty was signed by visiting Chinese Premier Li Peng and his Mongolian counterpart Punsajin Jasray. Mr. Li, who described the signing as an "epoch-making event," said the treaty would be formulated into a legally binding document for developing long-term cooperation. The Chinese premier, who arrived here Thursday at the end of a tour of Central Asian states, signed the document following two hours of talks with Mr. Jasray that focused on the development of bilateral relations.

Aziz to visit U.N. in May

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz will come to New York next month for another round of talks on Baghdad's compliance with U.N. resolutions on the scrapping of its weapons of mass destruction and future monitoring of its arms potential. Ambassador Rolf Ekens, head of the U.N. Special Commission in charge of dismantling Iraqi weapons, told reporters the talks were arranged during a visit to Baghdad from which he has just returned. A U.N. source said Mr. Aziz was expected to arrive in New York May 10 and would remain until about May 19. His visit would coincide with the Security Council's next periodic review on May 17 of Iraq's compliance with the weapons provisions of Gulf war resolutions.

Mr. Ekens on Thursday cited "positive developments in all areas" and a major breakthrough in identifying foreign suppliers for Iraq's chemical weapons programme. Mr. Aziz said he was especially pleased that Iraq, which previously withheld information about chemical weapons, recently delivered "a wealth of new documents" — it was a breakthrough. He later told the Associated Press that the information concerning foreign suppliers of Iraq's chemical weapons programme. The information had to be verified, he said. "I can say we have positive developments in all areas, especially in chemical weapons," he said.

Mr. Ekens circulated in the Security Council a joint Iraqi-U.N. statement saying the two sides "reviewed the considerable progress made" since the last round of high-level talks, held in New York on March 14-19, 1994. "They noted that many actions had been undertaken in this period, including inspections to establish the baseline for, and phase in, ongoing monitoring and verification."

This referred to data regarding Iraqi facilities capable of being used for both civilian and military purposes. Such baseline information is needed to enable U.N. inspectors to carry out long-term monitoring to ensure Iraq does not again acquire forbidden nuclear, chemical, biological and longer-range ballistic missile weapons.

"Both sides reiterated their commitment to continue and accelerate intensive efforts aimed at reaching their shared objective," the joint statement said. Mr. Ekens said the foreign ministry director general for West European Affairs, Ali Abani, told the official IRNA news agency that the charges were "utterly false."

"We categorically reject reports of collaboration between Iranian security officials and the IRA and regard such allegations as totally groundless," he said. Mr. Abani slammed British media reports on the row as "malicious propaganda."

Iranian Charge d'Affaires



AFGHAN PROTEST: A Pakistani policeman on Thursday tries to disperse Afghan women demonstrators in Islamabad protesting against the failure of their leaders to reach any sort of compromise over the ongoing violence in Afghanistan (AFP photo)

Arabs have nothing to fear from Israel in common market — study

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Arabs have nothing to fear from Israel in a common market for the Middle East, a Gulf study said Friday, as the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Jewish state signed a landmark economic accord. But the study by the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) said the Arab League's 22 members must first integrate their economies before joining Israel and other countries in a single market.

Although Israel has built a relatively large export-oriented industrial base, its exports are equivalent to less than 10 per cent of total Arab imports, said the study, published in the UAE daily Al Khaleej. Israel's exports of consumer goods stood at between \$11 and \$12 billion in 1992 while Arab imports of such products exceeded \$40 billion and their total imports have remained above \$100 billion.

Israel's exports of transport equipment stood at \$900 million in 1990 and those of electrical appliances at \$1.6 billion while Arab imports of such products stood at around \$42.6 billion, the study said. "Trade is a key component of Israel's gross domestic product, accounting for nearly 46 per cent in 1991," it said, "but the figures on Israeli exports show that they will have little impact on the imports of Arab countries."

In Paris, Israel and the PLO signed a landmark economic agreement on Friday, as part of an overall accord to launch Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Finance Minister Avraham Shohat, who signed for Israel, urged Arab countries to "remove the walls of economic boycott" and lift the embargo in force since the Jewish state was created in 1948.

"None of us can afford economic boycotts," he warned, referring to stiff competition from other regions. The Sharjah study saw benefits for both Arabs and Israel from a common market although the latter would reap more gains given its superior industries.

A free trade zone in the region would give Israel access to new markets and enable it to ensure its needs in oil and other raw materials, according to the study. In return, Arab states would find a new market for their oil and gas, but their exports of other goods would not rise greatly as the Israeli market is small. The United States and other countries have proposed a regional common market encompassing Israel, the Arabs, Turkey and Iran, saying this would bring about prosperity and boost confidence in peace.

But several Arab officials and businessmen have warned such a project would allow Israel to dominate Arab economies. Gulf Arab states are playing a key role in the multilateral track of the Middle East peace process. Oman hosted talks on water resources last week and Qatar will be the venue for a working session on arms control next week. In an interview with AFP in Oman, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said a common market would benefit all parties but stressed the project needed long discussion.

"We believe that the realistic option for Arab states to brace for the Middle East market is to set up a free trade zone," the UAE study said. "Another point is that Israel has a governmental, institutional, legal and administrative structure that is far superior to that in all Arab countries," it added.

"This should prompt our governments to consolidate democracy in their political and economic systems and revise their policies on education, training, planning and exploitation of resources."

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in an interview published Friday in the Qatari newspaper Al Sharq, criticised Arab states, saying they were "not up to the European standards of democracy."

Pope is 'excellent' following surgery

ROME (Agencies) — Pope John Paul II underwent successful surgery on a fractured thighbone Friday after slipping and falling as he got out of his bathtub, doctors at the Gemelli clinic where the pontiff was being treated said.

The Pope, 73, underwent three hours of surgery in what doctors described as a "routine" operation which involved placing a metal pin to help heal the fracture. Clinic Director Emilio Tressalti had told journalists outside the hospital earlier that the Pope's general condition was "optimal" and there was no need for concern.

"Of course, any operation requires a minimum of precautions, but this type of intervention is routine for us," he said. Pope John Paul was taken to the clinic after slipping and fracturing his thighbone as he was getting out of his bathtub Thursday evening.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro insisted that the fall was purely accidental and not due to an ailment. He said the pontiff, who was to have begun a three-day visit to Sicily Friday, had not lost consciousness "either before or after his fall."

Sicilian church officials said the visit was postponed Friday until a later unspecified date. Dr. Emilio Tressalti said earlier surgeons were inserting an artificial replacement for the head and neck of the fractured femur, or thigh bone.

"The Pope's general condition is excellent. It is a complicated operation only because of its nature," Dr. Tressalti said. The Polish-born pontiff, whose dizzying pace of travel around the world has become a trademark of his papacy, was expected to remain in hospital for three to four weeks for rest and physiotherapy, he added.

The accident, the Pope's second fall in six months, inevitably raised concern for his health, although he managed to crack a joke as he was wheeled into hospital. "You have to admire my loyalty," he told staff at the Gemelli, where he has been admitted six times.

Column Diana hints at return to public life

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana, estranged wife of the heir to Britain's throne, has hinted that she may be easing her self-imposed withdrawal from public life. She made a surprise appearance at a function for charity to aid hospices which took place at the terminally ill. Asked by Britain's Press Association news agency if she would be seeing more of her in months to come, the Princess of Wales replied, "You may be." Princess Diana announced last December she would be cutting down on her public activities and leading a more private life, devoting extra time to her sons, Prince William and Prince Henry. The princess, widely popular despite her separation from Prince Charles, had been increasingly irritated that her every step was dogged by the media, and on a couple of occasions had shouted at tabloid photographers lying in wait for her. But a Buckingham Palace spokesman sought to play down the importance of the appearance. "It would be wrong to read into her acceptance anything definite or specific about the direction of her work in the future," a palace spokesman said.

Swedish pop star attacked by German fan

STOCKHOLM (R) — Swedish pop star Jenny Berggren, a singer with rock band Ace of Base, was attacked at her home by a knife-wielding German fan, the singer said. Berggren, whose group's songs The Sign and Happy Nation have been number one hits around the world this year, was unharmed in the attack, although her mother received stab wounds to her hand. Berggren told Swedish Television the woman fan had been caught outside her home in Gothenburg, western Sweden, for two days. Early Wednesday morning the 21-year-old woman broke into the house where Berggren lives with her parents and forced the singer to her parents' room, where they overcame the German after a struggle.

Norwegian North Pole hero welcomed home

OSLO (R) — Norway's first-frosted Boerge Ousland, the first person to reach the North Pole alone and unaided, returned home Thursday to an enthusiastic crowd. "I never made the North Pole bigger than life itself — I never took any unnecessary risks," Mr. Ousland told reporters, clutching his six-year-old son Max at Oslo's Airport. "This was an honest trip and maybe one of the last classic challenges left. There are very few white spots on the map when you think in terms of sport achievements," said Mr. Ousland, who was airlifted off the North Pole after a 52-day icy slog. Mr. Ousland, who built up fat reserves by drinking a glass of olive oil every day for a year before setting off from Siberia, lost 20 kilos during the trip. His face was so frost-bitten, "I have never felt so small in all my life as when I was dropped off by the helicopter and left alone in minus 37 Celsius and a strong wind from the south," Mr. Ousland said about his first day on the icecap.

Former clerk jailed for embezzling millions

PAU, France (R) — A French court has jailed for five years a former bank clerk who embezzled more than 800 million francs (\$135 million) from investors attracted by promises of 30 per cent tax-free returns. Jackie Milesi, convicted of embezzlement and illicit banking, was also fined 350,000 francs (\$60,000) and condemned to pay 200 million francs (\$34 million) in damages. Two accomplices were given sentences of two and a half and two years, both with half of the term suspended. Mr. Milesi, a 53-year-old charmer who was sentenced Thursday, was estimated to have tricked 2,900 people from pensioners to wealthy investors. The prosecution said that Mr. Milesi, sacked from a bank for embezzlement 21 years ago, used his clients' funds to pay interest to earlier investors in a classic fraud trick. During the trial he admitted the scheme but denied being a crook.

Summary of Israel-PLO economic agreement

<p>PARIS (AFP) — This is a summary of the main points of the agreement signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) covering economic relations once Palestinian autonomy begins in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, as provided by the Israeli delegation:</p> <p>Import policy</p> <p>Israel and the Palestinian authority will have an import policy basically similar in all respects regarding imports and customs. Nonetheless, the Palestinian authority will be able to import mutually agreed goods at customs rates differing from those prevailing in Israel, following jointly agreed import procedures. Moreover, it will be able to import goods from Arab countries, in agreed, limited quantities. Arrangements will be made for the two customs authorities to jointly operate the border crossing in Jericho and Gaza.</p> <p>Monetary policy</p> <p>The Palestinian authority</p>	<p>will establish a monetary authority, whose main functions will be the regulating and supervision of the banks operating in the area, the determination within certain limits of the liquidity ratios on deposits, the management of foreign exchange reserves and the supervision of foreign exchange transactions.</p> <p>The two sides will continue to discuss the possibility of issuing various alternatives of a Palestinian currency. To encourage trade, they will mutually allow the opening of bank branches. Until then, the NIS (Israeli shekel) will continue to constitute a legal means of payment in the autonomy's areas side by side with other currencies.</p> <p>Direct taxation</p> <p>The Palestinian tax administration will conduct its own direct tax policy, including income tax on individuals and corporations, property taxes and municipal rates and fees, according to the policy and the rates determined by the Palestinian authority. The two parties will collect</p>	<p>income taxes on economic activities conducted in their respective areas. Israel will transfer to the Palestinian authority 75 per cent of the revenues from the income tax collected from Palestinians employed in Israel.</p> <p>Indirect taxation</p> <p>A VAT system similar to that operating in Israel will be operated also by the Palestinian authority. The VAT rates of the Palestinian authority will be between 15 per cent and 16 per cent.</p> <p>Labour</p> <p>Work in Israel is essential for the Palestinians expanding their employment opportunities; the guiding principle in this sphere is to enable mutual movement of labour. The rights of Palestinian workers employed in Israel will be preserved according to arrangements existing in Israel, a social security system being established in the meantime by the Palestinians.</p>	<p>Agriculture</p> <p>Agriculture produce from the autonomy will enter Israel freely, except for five goods on which agreed import quotas have been imposed for five years — tomatoes, cucumbers, potatoes, eggs, and broilers.</p> <p>Manufacturing</p> <p>There will be free movement of goods manufactured in the area.</p> <p>Tourism</p> <p>A Palestinian tourist administration will be set up to manage subjects related to tourism in the areas of the Palestinian authority. Tourists will move freely between Israel and the autonomy. Tourist agencies, touring companies and tourist guides will be able to operate "on the other side" provided they satisfy the relevant professional criteria.</p> <p>Fuel</p> <p>The price of gasoline in the autonomy will be determined according to the autonomy's costs in purchasing it, and the</p>	<p>taxes levied on gasoline in the autonomy. The agreement stipulates that the prices of gasoline will not fall short by more than 15 per cent of the maximum gasoline price in Israel.</p> <p>Insurance</p> <p>The agreement deals with two main topics.</p> <p>A. The full transfer of the licensing and supervision authority over the insurance business in the areas of the Palestinian authority.</p> <p>B. An agreement for the compulsory insurance of motor vehicles and the compensation of the victims of road accidents based on:</p> <p>— The Palestinian authority maintain in its area a system of compulsory insurance of motor vehicles in the form existing in Israel, but with limited compensation.</p> <p>— Policies issued on the Palestinian authority being valid also in Israel, and victims there being compensated according to the Israeli laws. And Israeli policies being valid in the areas of the Palestinian authority.</p>
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